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Calvinist Contact

An independent Christian weekly

January 5, 1990 / 45th year of publication / No. 2194

Reformed pastor focal point of Romanian Liberation

Photo: courtesy of Stefan Tokes

The Rev. and Mrs. Laszlo Tokes attended a video-taped interview with foreign journalists.

Bert Witvoet

MONTREAL — At the epicentre of demonstrations in the city of Timisoara, Romania, which led to the surprising overthrow of cruel dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, stands the heroic figure of the Rev. Laszlo Tokes, a 37-year-old pastor of the Reformed Church.

Tokes, by speaking up for the oppressed in the name of Christ, had drawn the ire of Romanian authorities, including leaders of his own church. Tokes did so in a country that was the last bastion of rigid orthodox communism in Eastern Europe..

Laszlo Toke's brother Stefan, an engineer who lives in Montreal, explained to *Calvinist Contact* the situation regarding the Reformed Church in Romania and the events that turned his brother into a dissident of world renown.

State-run church

There are about 2.7 million ethnic Hungarians living in Transylvania, one of three western provinces of Romania that were annexed in 1918. Of these ethnic Hungarians, half are Reformed and the other half Catholic, says Stefan Tokes. In Transylvania there is also a sizable population of ethnic Romanians who are mostly Greek Orthodox.

The Reformed Church in Romania is administratively divided into two presbyteries or regional synods, each with a bishop — Laszlo Papp in Cluj and Gyula Nagy in Oradea. Both leaders are state appointed, as are all religious leaders in the country, and both were puppets of the Ceausescu regime, according to Tokes.

There is only one Reformed theological school, a seminary in Cluj, with an enrolment of only five students. But there are some 30 vacancies in the Reformed churches.

It was this intolerable situation, plus the inadequate supply of Bibles, handbooks and calendars that led Rev. Laszlo Tokes to write letters of protest to Bishop Papp, explains Stefan. That was in 1982.

Bishop Papp, who resented the complaints, started leveling charges against Tokes, charges such as showing lack of respect for authority and causing a disturbance. The secret police had already informed Tokes that they would not punish him because "your own people will take care of that."

Church oppression

Laszlo Tokes was found guilty by an ecclesiastical body and removed from his congregation in Dej, a small town near Cluj. "Miraculously, when he appealed this sentence in 1984, he was found not guilty," says Stefan. Nevertheless, his bishop disciplined him. The congregation in Dej was asked to elect another minister from the list of candidates that did not include Tokes. They elected Tokes anyway. In spite of all this support, the bishop did not reappoint him and Tokes was unemployed for two years.

Through pressure from human rights organizations outside the country, Tokes was given a position as assistant minister in a small congregation in Timisoara. The senior minister did not even bother to introduce him to the congregation and instructed him not to do anything unless he was told.

There was a lot of dead wood in the 200-member congregation, says Stefan. "My mother wept when she saw what kind of church her son was asked to serve." In spite of all these obstacles, Laszlo Tokes' ministry was so fruitful that in two years time membership in the church grew to 2,000. Catholic Hungarians and even ethnic Romanians joined Reformed Hungarians in what became a vital congregation. The senior minister left the church.

Increasing confrontations

But this was only the beginning of persecution for Laszlo Tokes. He remained a human rights activist, protesting Ceausescu's plans to level Hungarian-Romanian villages with bulldozers, thereby severely disrupting churches and communities. He wrote to political leaders like Lech Walesa, to church leaders, to the Hungarian media and human rights organizations about the oppression of his people.

With 15 other pastors, Tokes wrote a memorandum to Romanian authorities in September 1988. He heard nothing until he was suspended by the government in April of 1989, and by his bishop a few months later.

In July, Tokes openly condemned the inhumane policies of Ceausescu in an interview with a western European news agency. He stood up for the Hungarian minority in Romania. The program was broadcast in Hungary.

In the fall of 1989 it became clear that the war was on. One of his best elders, who had protected him, was found dead on September 16. The husband of one of his female elders was beaten unconscious and woke up in the hospital. Many other members of the church were harassed. The congregation sent out a petition in support of Tokes, signed by 1,500 members.

In October, Laszlo was told at a trial not to deliver any more sermons. He barricaded himself inside the church for two weeks in defiance of the order.

On November 2, an attempt was made on his life. Four hooded men entered his home. They might well have killed him, says Stefan, had there not been guests in his home. A fight ensued in which knives were wielded by the assailants and chairs were used in defence. Laszlo was wounded, but escaped critical injury. The hooded men warned him that next time their target would be his wife.

See **WEEKEND** — p. 2

Thinkbit

The Lord is my rock (Psalm 18:2) as I roll with the punches (2 Timothy 3:12).

Ron Dube, imprisoned in Kingston

Colombia is a country at war with itself

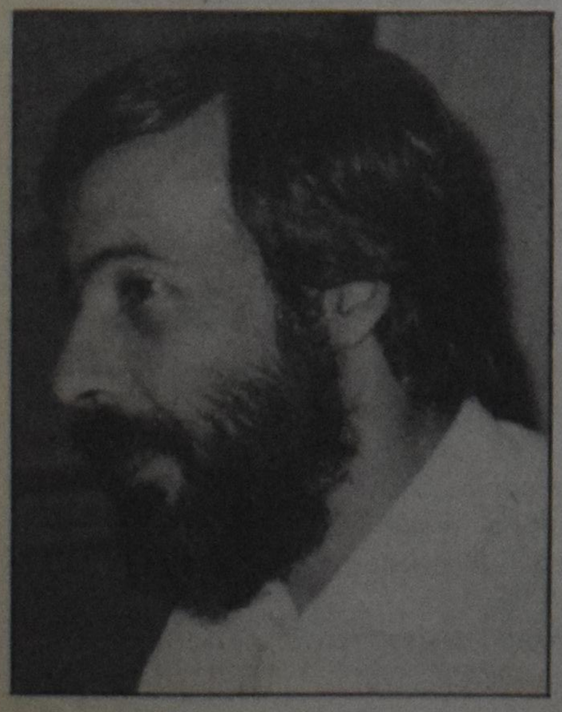


Photo: Robert VanderVennen

Gustavo Gallon says that paramilitary forces kill 11 people a day in his native Colombia.

Robert VanderVennen

TORONTO — The real problem in the Central American country of Colombia is not the rise of drug lords, but the firmly-rooted paramilitary groups.

That message was brought to Toronto recently by Colombian lawyer Gustavo Gallon, director of the Colombian Section of the Andrean Commission of Jurists, a non-governmental organization that gives international information on human rights in the Andean region of Latin America.

Colombia is a violent society with a democratically elected government. But the two political parties have a unique power-sharing agreement in which the parties take turns in running the government after alternate elections.

The government is really controlled by elite landowners, guerrilla armies are firmly entrenched and some 140 paramilitary forces operate with a measure of government protection, Gallon told a briefing session at the Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America (ICCHRLA).

Drug lords have entered this scene as a power force alongside the government, military forces, paramilitary groups (death squads) and guerrillas. The elected government is understandably rather weak, with its own military forces operating with a great deal of autonomy.

It is common knowledge that many participants in the paramilitary forces are government persons, especially members of the armed forces and police, who are moonlighting to achieve aims by direct force rather than going through the government and the courts.

The result, say ICCHRLA and Amnesty International, is a human rights crisis. An average of 11 assassinations are carried out each week, with many brutally tortured before they are killed.

Especially at risk are leaders in trade unions, churches, and in the new third

See **SCHOOLS** — p. 2

In this issue:

Geologist Clarence Menninga reminds us not to ignore God's story in Creation . . . . . p. 10
Dick Farenhorst furthers the discussion about wandering covenant children . . . . . p. 12
Mary's Song is revolutionary, says Gerald Vandezande . . . . . p. 13

Weekend of violence in Romania

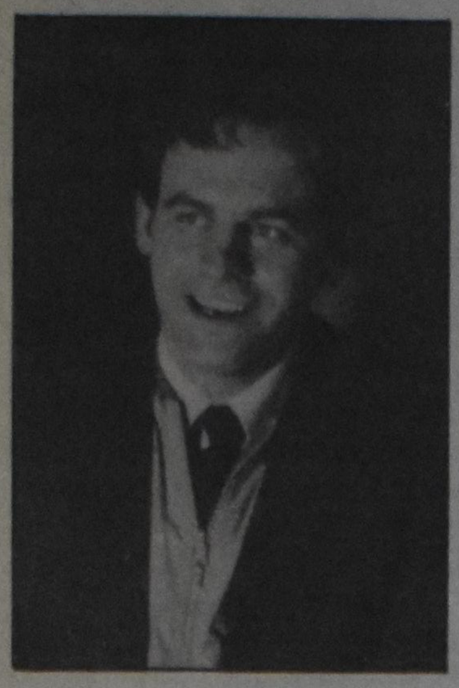


Photo: courtesy Stefan Tokes
Rev. Laszlo Tokes.

... continued from page 1.

According to Stefan, the authorities felt they had to separate Laszlo from his congregation so that he would be more vulnerable and less effective. Laszlo has a wife, who is pregnant, and a three-year-old child. According to Rev. Csaba Baksa, a Hungarian pastor in Hamilton, Ont., authorities wanted to ship the family to eastern Romania where they would have no contact with their own people.

On Friday, December 15, Laszlo was told that he was going to be evicted from his home. Roman Catholic and Serbian priests joined members of Tokes' congregation in Timisoara to form a human chain around the pastor's house. The peaceful vigil was kept until the police moved in on Sunday morning at 2 a.m. There were several clashes at that time.

The details are not very clear. "But we do know from reports from someone who attended the morning service that Laszlo still preached a sermon at 10 a.m.," says Stephan.

The police moved in on the crowd on Sunday afternoon, and into the parsonage. Laszlo appeared in front of the window to calm down the people, but the sight of his bruises and of blood on his hands stirred the crowd even more.

That was the final spark that started the demonstrations in Timisoara, with thousands smashing portraits of Nicolae Ceausescu and shouting anti-Ceausescu slogans. Books by the hated leader were burned and vehicles were overturned. After the army moved in there were many bodies lying in the streets. Casualties in Timisoara were reported to run as high as two thousand.

World reaction to the massacre was swift. On Monday, December 18, 40,000 people demonstrated in Hungary. The world press carried the story and various governments called in their Romanian ambassadors. In Toronto, a demonstration was held on December 20.

In the meantime Stefan did not know where his brother and family were being held. He was concerned about his parents and his four brothers, three sisters and their families. Several of them had been questioned by the *Securitata*, the Romanian secret police, for bringing food to their brother. Mr. Tokes Senior was a professor of theology at the seminary in Cluj, but was fired before his retirement came up.

Stefan, who came to Canada in 1969, did not get involved in human rights organizations for 15 years out of fear of bringing harm to his relatives in Romania. But five years ago, when he realized that his family was in danger anyway, he became active. He is now co-ordinator of a Montreal human rights organization.

Since the overthrow of the Romanian government, news has reached Stefan that his brother and family are safe. It's through Stefan's work and that of others, that his brother was protected from greater harm, he believes. Amnesty International had accepted Laszlo for worldwide action. The Hungarian parliament had nominated Laszlo Tokes and another leading Romanian dissident, Doina Cornea, for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Stefan Tokes was inspired partly by a "beautiful piece of writing about ecumenism" by his brother, in which Laszlo Tokes states that ecumenism is not achieved by meetings and congresses but by allowing the Word of God to act in your life as you face hardship.

Schools for assassins operate publicly

... continued from page 1.

political party. These are the many victims, joined by the prominent few recently killed by the drug mafia. The rich have the power and they keep it by force, even in a democracy.

One group that has been especially victimized is the Patriotic Union, a new political party that has arisen to challenge the ruling partnership of the Conservatives and Liberals. Hundreds of its leaders and members have been assassinated by paramilitary death squads.

Government policies are not repressive, says Gallon, but the government does not have the power to do enough in this crisis. The government likes to blame violence on the Marxist guerrillas, adds the Washington Office on Latin America, a non-government agency in Washington, D.C.

Paramilitary forces are so prominent that in 1987 a Bogota paper published a list of 130 known death squads operating in Colombia, reports the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, in New York City. In April another Bogota paper published the names of what it described as the two most important schools for assassins, including specifics on their locations, admission requirements, and pay scale of members.

The Lawyers Committee adds that "Colombia has been under an almost continual state of siege for the last 40 years, endowing presidents with sweeping powers to suspend many individual and political rights to respond to the presumed threat to public order."

Into this situation the United States has come with massive aid in the form of guns and military force. But the U.S. has not tried to condition its aid on the prosecution of military and police officials involved in paramilitary activity, or on a general improvement in the human rights situation, says the Washington Office on Latin America.

The Washington Office adds this chilling comment: "It is doubtful that U.S. aid will even make a dent in the drug trade or in the violence, given the co-operation that exists between the traffickers and sectors of the Colombian military and police forces.

In fact, the level and nature of political violence in Colombia makes U.S. military aid more likely to exacerbate domestic internal conflict and fuel political violence. The aid may even end up in the hands of the very people the United States is trying to combat."

BETWEEN THE LINES

Socio-political comment by Syd Hielema, Clarence Joldersma, Jake Kuiken, Jim Romahn

History is ending

Watching Berliners tear down the hated wall that has divided them far too long is history in the making. In fact, the events in Eastern Europe during the last few months are unprecedented in the lives of those of us who are (nearly) post-War offspring. Evening after evening, *The National* and *The Journal* detail the story of change where change was thought impossible just months ago. Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland and Ukraine, all seem to be heading for a level of democratization that would have been laughed-off as ridiculous a year ago. In fact, even Toronto's version of a national newspaper has taken note and created a regular section entitled, "Europe in Transition."

While Mikhail Gorbachev is ostensibly leading the pack, it's sometimes difficult to tell whether he has really rediscovered that leadership is mostly just following at the head of the crowd rather than trying to show it the way! In any case, it's interesting to note that some commentators have begun to call it a revolution. And, not unlike the French Revolution of 200 years ago, there are powerful spiritual forces at work, all seeking expression in the opportunities not available for a good part of this century.

For anyone in doubt, worthwhile reading includes a recent series of articles carried by the *Globe and Mail* entitled, "The End of History" by Francis Fukuyama, deputy director of the U.S. State Department and a former policy analyst at the Rand Corporation.

His point about all of the changes in Europe is that many commentators "... sense dimly that there is some larger process at work, a process that gives coherence and order to the daily headlines." In summary, Fukuyama notes that in this century, Western liberalism has been variously threatened by remnants of absolutism, Bolshevism, fascism and Marxism. In his mind the current upheaval in Eastern Europe is the "unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism." In fact, he believes that we are witnessing "... the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government."

The 'ideal' and the 'real'

Fukuyama's point of view is based largely on the philosophy of G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831) as interpreted by a Russian emigre by the name of Alexandre Kojeve. Teaching in Paris in the 1930s, Kojeve relied on Hegel's belief that contradictions between the "ideal" and the "real" drive human history.

In the end, the conflict between the two leads to the ideal constructing the real. Thus, Kojeve proclaimed that at the end of history there would be a "universal homogenous state" — "the state that emerges at the end of history is liberal insofar as it recognizes and protects through a system of law man's universal right to freedom, and democratic insofar as it exists only with the consent of the governed."

While Fukuyama does not suggest that there will be no further conflict of major or minor importance throughout the world, he does maintain that, in essence, the Western democracies have arrived at the end of their political development. History for these nations will essentially be a matter of fine tuning, using the latest instruments of technology to solve problems such as those of the environment. Consumerism driven by a market economy will be the essence of the next centuries.

Conflict, to the extent that it continues to exist, will be focused primarily in those areas of the world where the merging of the ideal and the real has not yet fully come to fruition. The Eastern Bloc countries are now at a major turning point. At this stage of development there is at least the appearance that a choice has been made to change the direction of the last 70 years. If the change is made, then for them too, the end of history is inevitable!

Boredom to follow?

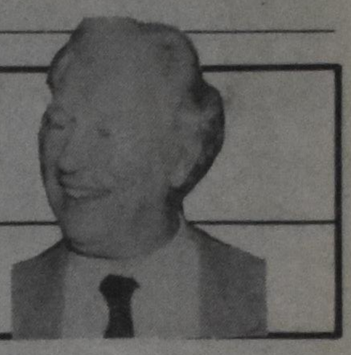
Already shortly after the War, Kojeve looked to the European Community and saw there the realization of the universal homogenous state and the subsequent end of history. However, one gets the uncomfortable feeling that Fukuyama's studious avoidance of any significant reference to the role of the U.S. lends itself, in fact, to tacit support for its frequently self-proclaimed doctrine of a "manifest destiny" as the example *par excellence* and leader of democracy.

World peace is seen as the conclusion to an ascending level of diminishing conflict, inevitably, for Fukuyama, culminating in "... centuries of boredom." In neither Hegel's, Kojeve's nor Fukuyama's understanding of current events is there the presence of the Prince of Peace!

It's a fascinating way to begin the last decade of this century!

Jake Kuiken is a social worker who lives in Calgary.

Pressreview



Carl D. Tuyl

Happy New Year! May the snowplow skip your driveway, and the birds your strawberries. May you not lose your car keys or your sense of humour; may your table be well set and your house be filled with love and laughter. May Michael Wilson be friendly to you, and may your pantyhose never run.

★★★★

Seven per cent Michael Wilson did a hocus-pocus number in the House. The GST has gone from nine to seven per cent, but the Minister will get the other two per cent, come what may. Some people will have to pay more surtax, corporations will have to cough up $200 million, and your good-morning-doughnut-with coffee will be taxable. On top of that, MPs will no longer get cheap haircuts or prime rib steaks. The government is cutting about one billion out of its $150 billion expenses. Next, there will be a foodbank operating on the hill.

★★★★

Agriculture Minister Don Mazankowski also has a credibility problem. He assured farmers that the government has no "pre-conceived agenda." Hardly anyone believes him. His critics claim that the Tories have a well-developed, subversive plan to change the structure of Canadian agriculture by dismantling marketing boards, reducing farm subsidies and emphasizing free enterprise.

★★★★

Dr. E. Broadbent is now director of the newly founded Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development. This position will keep Dr. Broadbent well-supplied with cash. A number of NDPers, particularly from the West, expressed dismay about Broadbent's acceptance of a job from the Tories.

★★★★

Keep your eyes on political happenings in February. On February 12 and 13 there will be an unprecedented meeting of 16 NATO and seven Warsaw Pact foreign ministers in Ottawa. The meeting will discuss the so-called "open skies" proposal, but it is rumoured that U.S. Secretary of State James Baker wants to include a discussion on the reduction of armed forces in Europe.

★★★★

February 12 is also the day of the by-election in the Chambly riding where NDP pro-Meech Lake candidate Phil Edmonston is contesting a seat. Edmonston goes against the current NDP stance on Meech Lake. Yukon Audrey wants the accord amended, which is the official NDP policy. Edmonston wants the accord pass unamended. *The Toronto Star* wrote that Bourassa would compromise and allow a parallel agreement to the constitutional accord, but Bourassa contradicted The *Star* with a lot of waving of the hand. Does he, or doesn't he?

★★★★

The RCMP was accused of bowing to political pressure. RCMP chief Inkster rejected that charge rather resolutely by telling one and all that the force investigated 30 MPs in the last five years and that 15 are still under investigation. Members of the House were stunned, and changed their tune quickly. Instead of political interference accusations, members now say that the Speaker has been too lenient in granting the RCMP access to the Hill to conduct investigations. Speaker Fraser has hired a Montreal lawyer to advise him on the MPs privileges and the execution of search warrants on Parliament Hill.

★★★★

Good news, bad news: creeps in Red Deer, Alta., stole more than $20,000 cash and goods meant for needy families. The community, however, responded quickly and generously by bringing in even more than was stolen.

★★★★

External Affairs mandarins worked over-time formulating Canada's response to the U.S. military intervention in Panama. The nature of Canada's relation with the U.S. asked for sympathetic approval, but Canada's new membership in the Organization of American States required disapproval. Complicated? Not really: all in a day's work for diplomats.

★★★★

European diplomats are still trying to create order in, and sensible approaches to, the totally new situation. Much of the heavy thinking is done in the area of eventual German unification, which is inevitable. Look at all the "Ein Vaterland" slogans.

★★★★

And here is an interesting political speculation from "Commentary," which is a publication of the American Jewish Committee: Will the Soviet Union in its near catastrophic economic crisis look to Germany for help? It happened before. In 1920 the Soviets and Germany, to the astonishment of the international community, concluded the Treaty of Rapallo under which the two nations forgave each other's financial claims and restored normal relations. While America and Europe provided the Soviet Union with food relief to fend off starvation, the German heavy industry (Krupp, among others) began equipping the Soviet military machine. Russia and West Germany have by now signed 30 co-production agreements. Mercedes-Benz is negotiating to build a plant in the USSR, and Soviet managers and engineers train by the hundreds in West Germany. During Gorbachev's recent visit to Bonn the economic relationship between the two countries was the main item on the agenda.

★★★★

Both Canada and the U.S., attracted by the smell of big bucks and prompted by business interests, are re-establishing relationships with China.

★★★★

News trickling out of Rumania is depressing. The fate of Reformed minister Tokes is unknown. The country has closed its borders so that the slaughter of political opponents may go unnoticed, but news of the blood bath slipped past the borders anyway. Marxists in Brazil lost the presidential election, and so did Chile's Pinochet, who will remain that country's commander of armed forces.

★★★★

Would Joseph bring Mary to Bethlehem this year, asked the *Catholic Register*. Not if he were smart, I would say!

★★★★

Well, let me join the prophets and make predictions for 1990. Here they are: The Christian Reformed Church in North America will be re-structured, though I don't believe that the CRC will have a Canadian synod. The world-wide wave of nationalism will continue, and there will be steps taken toward the unification of Germany. South Africa's De Klerk will see the light and initiate steps to dismantle apartheid. The U.S. Defense Department will spend about $300 billion in 1990. Canada will receive more millionaires from Hong Kong. Monsieur will buy more shoes. We will get stuck with the GST. *Pravda* will report landings of aliens. There will be no peace at Canada Post. Waters will not get into the Senate. And the plastic we use will not decompose. That will take another 90,000 years or so.

Carl D. Tuyl is pastor of First Christian Reformed Church, Kingston, Ont.

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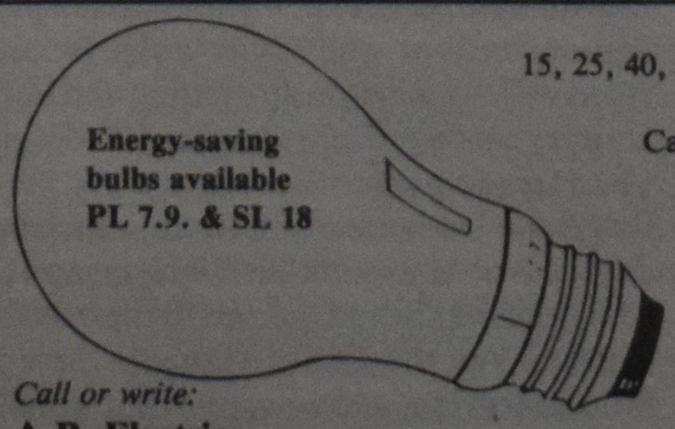

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Calvinist Contact

An independent Christian weekly that seeks to proclaim the truth, care and rule of Jesus Christ.

Calvinist Contact: (ISSN0410-3882) is published by Calvinist Contact Publishing Limited, 261 Martindale Rd., Unit 4, St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1;
Tel: (416) 682-8311 FAX: (416) 682-8313
Office hours: 8:15 a.m. - 4:15 p.m.
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Proofreading: Willy Suk-Kleer

Editorial Advisory Board: Robert De Moor, Robert Bernhardt, Heather Looy, Sam Da Silva, Anne Hutten, Judy Knoops, Peter DeBruyne, Nicholas B. Knoppers, Jacob Kuntz, William VanHuizen.

Canada mail: Second class mail registration #0451. Postage paid at St. Catharines, Ontario. Postmaster: Send address changes to *Calvinist Contact*, 261 Martindale Rd., Unit 4, St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1.

U.S. mail: *Calvinist Contact* (USPS518-090), published weekly except for July 6, 20, Aug. 3, 10 and Dec. 28, by Calvinist Contact Publishing Limited, 261 Martindale Rd., Unit 4, St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1. Second class postage paid at Lewiston, NY 14092. Send address changes to *Calvinist Contact*, Box 110, Lewiston, NY 14092.

Advertising: Display advertising deadline is Wednesday at 8:30 a.m. of the preceding week. Classified advertising deadline is Thursday at 8:30 a.m. for the next week's issue. See classified pages.
The publication of comments, opinions or advertising does not imply agreement or endorsement by either *Calvinist Contact* or Calvinist Contact Publishing Limited.

Printed in Canada.

Subscriptions	**Canada**	**United States**
Six months	$18.50	$17.00
One year	$32.50	$28.00
Two years	$60.00	$51.00
Three years	$90.00	$76.50
Overseas: $120.00 airmail		**$65.00 surface mail**

Editorial

1990 — one more time around the block?

New Year's Day, unlike Christmas and Easter, is not an occasion that celebrates an event in the past. Wait a minute, you say, on January 1 we remember that God set the earth in motion around the sun. Each revolution around the sun constitutes a year. Is that so? May I then wish you all a happy revolution in 1990.

Is going around the sun really such a big deal? Is it an event? Is driving around the block once also an event? We don't stop turning after we have gone around the sun once, do we? Does an event not have to have a definable beginning and end?

Arbitrary date

And why do we celebrate New Year's on the first day of January? Could we not celebrate it just as well on, say, June 11, which happens to be my birthday. Haven't we completed a full revolution around the sun on that glorious day? Suppose the year began on June 11, then January 1 would not be New Year's day, but day 21 in the sixth month of the year 55 Anno Berti.

Do you know that the Egyptians used to celebrate New Year's Day in the middle of June? (I forgive them for missing my birthday by four days. They were aiming for June 11 but their calculations were confused by the late flooding of the Nile one year.) The Romans used to celebrate New Year's Day on the first of March, until in 153 B.C. some emperor decided that the annual installation of government office-bearers be moved from that date to the first of January, thereby officially starting a new government year. This event eventually blossomed into a festival lasting several days.

Universal clock work

Somehow, my conclusion that on January 1 we celebrate having gone around the block one more time does not quite satisfy, I agree. The calendar year may have been decided for political reasons (maybe the emperor was low in the polls that year), but the fact that 365 days constitute a year can hardly be considered artificial. We are talking about a clock that involves the motion of planets and centrifugal and gravitational forces of immense proportions, unleashed at the time of creation. It's a tour de force that cannot be duplicated by any creature.

There's another way in which going around the sun once is not chicken feed, especially not if you think that most of us will do it only 60 or 70 times, and, if we are strong like my father-in-law, 92 times. Not only is there a clock in the universe, there's a clock inside ourselves too, and we know that it has been set like a timer and will one day suddenly jolt into a CLING! Waiting for a timer to go off can be an unsettling experience.

Victory over time

What a lousy way of ending a year or entering a new one, though — waiting for the timer to go off. Better to focus on the bigger clock, and to find our place and task under the sun. Much better to read Psalm 90, a prayer of Moses the man of God.

Moses was not worried about life coming to an end. True, he reflected on the brevity of life, made shorter still by sin (don't we know it), but his real concern was that this short life might have meaning, i.e., "Teach us to number our days aright .... Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love .... Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us .... Establish the work of our hands."

Moses looked for a way to overcome the terror of temporality. He found his answer in the dwelling place of the one for whom a thousand years are like a day that has just gone by. The solution to temporality is eternity. The answer to boredom is numbering your days aright. The answer to depression is having God's unfailing love wash over you in the morning. The answer to futility is having your work established. The solution to the ongoing human and social question of morale is divine favour.

The year of our Lord A.D. 1990, is for us, people of the dust, no threat if we seek the favour of the Lord. January 1 is then the gateway to a brand new time of service — a new opportunity to follow Jesus.

Happy swing around the son!

BW

Guest Editorial

Living through revolutionary times

David T. Koyzis

Until a few months ago, I would have said that 1968 was the most remarkable year of my life in terms of the sheer number of significant political events converging within those 12 months. I turned 13 that year and it was a bit unsettling to enter adolescence amidst the turmoil of the late 60s. Of course, youth typically lacks historical perspective, and I could perhaps be forgiven for not recalling that our forebears lived through similar periods of turmoil. Eighteen forty-eight was one such year, filled as it was with liberal revolutions sweeping the European continent and attempting to bring down the old order put in place by the Congress of Vienna in 1815.

Needless to say, I have since changed my mind about 1968. It now looks rather tame compared with 1989, which saw one-half of humanity convulsed by similar revolutions, calling into question the ideology of communism and bringing down the old "order" created by the second World War and the ensuing Cold War. Academics are ordinarily reluctant to speak in superlatives or to make grand sweeping statements, but I find myself groping for the right words to describe the events of the past year. None can quite do them justice, and I am forced to fall back on a plethora of cliches which have already been overused by the media: "unprecedented," "historic," "remarkable," "earth-shaking."

Nineteen sixty-eight frightened me, with its news of an unwinnable American war, two assassinations, student demonstrations, and Soviet tanks. By contrast, 1989 was mostly filled with tremendously exciting and uplifting news: country after country casting off the shackles of communism and breathing the air of freedom after 40 or more years. (We ought not, of course, to forget the Tiananmen massacre, which has kept China in the darkness of Maoist totalitarianism, and the violence in Romania which, thanks be to God, led to the overthrow of Ceausescu's evil empire.) Yet, the pace of change in these countries is more than a little unnerving, and we cannot but wonder what shape the world will assume in the coming weeks and months.

(Continued on page 5)

(Editorial continued)

A resumption

One observer assures us that history is coming to an end. In a much-discussed *National Interest* article, the American State Department analyst, Francis Fukuyama, argues that, with the apparent end of the Cold War and its clash of ideologies, history as we know it is drawing to a close. In an odd parody of Marx, Fukuyama asserts that the triumph of liberalism and democracy represents the final stage of history. All that is left is for humankind to settle into an endlessly boring suburban-shopping-mall existence. We have reached the millennium.

Aside from the fact that only a North American could spout such absurdities (the people of Bangladesh will undoubtedly be thrilled to know that they will soon be inhabiting split-level bungalows and braving bumper-to-bumper traffic on the Dacca expressways), Fukuyama's forecast is quickly being overtaken by reality. Indeed, to me it looks very much as if, far from ending, history is *resuming* in eastern Europe after having been artificially placed on hold for 40 years. We are now seeing these countries leave behind the facile platitudes of a supposedly monolithic workers' "paradise" and move into the somewhat chaotic world of political pluralism with its constant give and take. History is just beginning for these people.

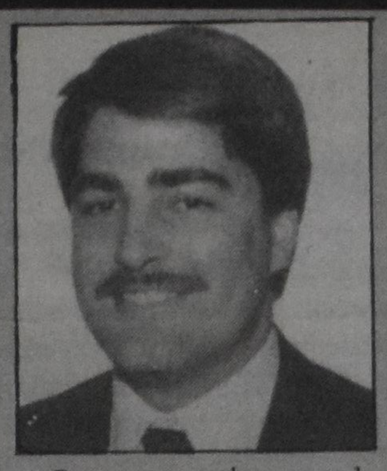
What about the rest of us? For us history may not be either beginning or ending, but it is certainly taking a sharp turn. Whether this turn will be for the better or the worse cannot, of course, yet be determined. The future is always a mystery, but its enigmas seem especially impenetrable now. We are poised, as it were, on the threshold of a darkened room, waiting with some apprehension for someone to turn on the lights.

Our older sisters and brothers in the faith have been through other times of instability, including revolution, depression and war. Given their long experience, they are able to look through the eyes of faith and see the world with the calm assurance that God is in charge. Nineteen sixty-eight came and went. Nineteen eighty-nine is now over. Other similar years will come and go. But with the church of all ages and places, we can join with the psalmist in singing:

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and mountains quake with their surging.

David Koyzis is assistant professor of Political Science at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ont.

FETISHES/DAVE FEDDES



The pendulum has swung

Once upon a time, nearly all Reformed Christians in North America deplored the "saloon" as "a pesthole, a gateway to hell!" Most supported total abstinence from alcoholic beverages. Indeed, a majority in the U.S. early this century demanded that Prohibition be the law of the land for all Americans, not just the choice of Christians.

The Christian Reformed Synod of 1928 warned its people against playhouses and movie theatres. One's eyes might be corrupted by seeing Clark Gable kiss a lady; or one's ears could be poisoned by hearing him utter the word "damn" once during the course of a movie. When Calvin Seminary Professor B.K. Kuiper was caught attending movies, he apologized profusely for such evil conduct. Nevertheless, Kuiper was fired.

Gambling, too, was a symptom of worldliness. Any shuffling of cards or rolling of dice indicated an evil belief in blind chance and a tacit rejection of God's providence. Attempts to win money through gambling added the sins of bad stewardship and greed for easy money to the wicked belief in luck.

Dancing was taboo. The square dance and the waltz were traps laid by Satan. Jazz was an exciting but fatal siren song. Dancing and modern music were first steps on the road to lust.

Hardly anyone today would advocate prohibition as an official government policy. Many Reformed people feel free to enjoy a social drink. Church youth enjoy time in bars and church weddings are followed by a celebration which sometimes duplicates the bar scene. Church members are often bound by alcohol. Meanwhile, we proclaim the gospel of liberty to a culture bound by its addiction.

What should be prohibited?

Most Reformed people have cast off some inhibitions. It is all right now to attend plays and movies and church publications print movie reviews. These reviews are usually not so prudish as to condemn a movie for blasphemous language or provocative nudity, as long as the film has artistic merit. Church people flock to movies. They do not have to fear a lingering kiss or a single profane word. Today's movie fare features going to bed as one of the only ways to show that two people (usually unmarried) are in love. Vulgarity, profanity and off-colour jokes spice up the language. The horror genre features plenty of gory mutilation, graphically capturing each spattering of blood.

Reformed people can enjoy Trivial Pursuit or Monopoly, even though playing involves rolling dice. They can play cards without feeling guilty. Some even play poker or buy lottery tickets without too many qualms. Meanwhile, governments increasingly tax the foolish and desperate by aggressively promoting lotteries. Increasing numbers of people in North America are becoming compulsive gamblers.

Dancing and modern music have found increasing respectability among the Reformed. Now "dirty dancing" can set hormones hopping to lustful lyrics — all in innocent fun. At least we don't have to worry about subtly seductive music. There is more straightforward declaration: "I want your sex!"

Those who came before this generation did not use much discernment: they roundly cursed all "worldly amusements." But today's generation is not using much discernment either: they are swallowing the camels along with the gnats. Reformed people discovered Christian freedom in the grey areas of entertainment. As they were doing so, a lot of the grey turned black — the black of sin.

Dave Feddes is pastor of Westmount Christian Reformed Church, Strathroy, Ont.

Letter

What about the West?

It was good to see an article in a recent *Calvinist Contact* by your associate editor, Marian Van Til, in regard to the seafarers ministry. She suggested that the readers make some Christmas parcels for the seafarers, and also what they should contain, which is highly recommended.

But as I read on I was surprised that the only address given was that of Rev. Uittenbosch in Montreal. I hope that it was an oversight that the seafarers ministry in Vancouver was not mentioned. The editorial staff of C.C. must be aware of the extensive seafarers ministry on the West coast under the able direction of Christian Reformed chaplain Rev. Jeff Dresselhuis.

So it would be great if in future articles, the address of that ministry could be included as well. It is: Christian Reformed Church Ministry to Seafarers, P.O. Box 76721, Station S, Vancouver, BC V5R 5S7.

A. Kuiper
Richmond, B.C.

Response:
You are our eyes and ears

You do well to mention this important West Coast ministry; yes, we are aware of it. In fact, I thought of it as I was preparing the information sent to us by Rev. Uittenbosch. But that's the key: sending us the information. Every year, Rev. Uittenbosch zealously sends us material regarding preparing Christmas packages. Unfortunately, Rev. Dresselhuis doesn't. (I recall phoning him about that once several years ago, encouraging him to send us the Christmas information as well as updates on the work there. We did receive such material for a while, but haven't recently.)

I could have included the address of the West coast ministry by looking it up in the Christian Reformed Church's *Yearbook*. But I could not assume that all the instructions and specifications would be the same as those for the East coast ministry and we had no specific information about the West Coast ministry.

You will understand the difficulty of *us* contacting every ministry and agency which we know is "out there" for the purpose of soliciting information from them. We simply don't have the personnel and money necessary to do that.

We need to rely on people to take the initiative in sending material to us. We can then decide if it is appropriate for publication.

We would welcome much more news from people and agencies in the West. Though the bulk of our readers live in Ontario, we very consciously try not to be too Ontario oriented (though it may not look like it sometimes). But those of you who live in places other than Ontario can help us achieve a better geographical balance.

So if there is something newsworthy happening among Christians in your part of the West or the Maritimes or wherever, let us know. Please note, though, that we said among Christians, not necessarily Christian Reformed. Just as we don't have a solely Ontario audience, we don't have a solely Christian Reformed audience.

Thanks for the opportunity to explain our "oversight." We hope to hear from more of you Westerners.

MVT

Pontius' Puddle

SNOW IS LIKE THE NEW YEAR IT BEGINS AS A GIFT FROM GOD--
PURE, UNSPOILED, FULL OF HOPE AND PROMISE
SPLAT
THEN IT FALLS INTO THE HANDS OF MANKIND.

Letters

Keeping in touch

While reading the October 27 issue of *Calvinist Contact* recently, an article on the Independent Learning Center caught my attention.

I work for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee in Haiti, in a program that employs numerous local Haitian staff. Many of them did not have the opportunity to go to school past the primary level when they were young, but would welcome the opportunity now. Thus I am looking for institutions that offer distance education programs.

We enjoy C.C. every week. It helps us keep in touch with our church back home, and also provides some stimulation and diversion from our daily concerns here in Haiti.

Ray Vander Zaag
Port-au-Prince
Haiti

Compliment and question

Gerald Vandezande, you deserve a ten plus for taking the Prime Minister to task (see letter to the editor "Has Mulroney changed his mind on respect for life?" Nov. 24). You used an excellent argument when you compared Mulroney's speech against capital punishment with his speech against the right to life. You did well to point to Mulroney's speech in The Hague when he said that "the right to life is the right from which all other rights stem."

Except, Gerald, you should explain what you mean when you say, on the one hand, that government needs to introduce a law and social policy measures that enable women to make life-affirming decisions for themselves and their unborn children, and on the other hand, that society has a duty to protect human life at all stages of development.

Hans Visser
Taber, Alta.

Pensive Dutchie

Syrt Wolters

Witnessing among friends

Recently I attended a seven-week seminar on "Witnessing Among Friends." As instruction material a booklet by the same title was used. (It was written by the Christian Reformed Church.) I did not miss a single session, and at the end, participants were asked to evaluate the course.

In my evaluation I said that I had enjoyed the fellowship with the participants; that I was glad I had come, because I had learned to appreciate several of my fellow communicants in the church much better. More than once I had been touched by the sincerity and openness of my fellow "seminarians."

Yet, I had serious misgivings about the entire course. It created far too much the impression that witnessing is mainly a matter of "how to say things." The course, in several parts, dealt too much with the *technique* of "selling" the gospel. Sometimes so strongly, that I was asking myself: What are we selling? Vacuum cleaners? Life Insurance? Or what else?

It reminded me of denominations, including my own, who campaign to increase their membership by so-many members in a certain length of time. This turns me off; I see it as something totally unworthy of the gospel. Have we sunk so low that we must use all kinds of cheap tricks to promote the Kingdom? Sarcastically, I was ready to expect that a prize would be awarded to those who "brought in the greatest number of won souls." For instance, a free trip for two to Reno, Nevada.

I had that same feeling a couple of times when I read the guide book, "witnessing among Friends."

Not just talk

Let us never forget that the Church of Christ in history grew the fastest in times of persecution! The Dutch saying (translated), "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church," I think is still valid. And why was the church persecuted? Because the believers witnessed, not so much by "talking," but by doing the truth.

Truth is not what we know, but what we do! John says in one of his letters: "Who thinks to have no sin, is a liar and does not the truth!" It is not so much how many doorbells we are ringing to tell the people of Jesus Christ, but much more how we show in all that we do how much we love Jesus. Loving Jesus means obeying him, as Jesus himself obeyed the Father — unto death!

If we obey in that way, we will be a salting salt — and the world may persecute us. Individually and communally (collectively). We will show a lifestyle so radically different from the world's lifestyle, that we will be noticed. Not necessarily as "nice" people, but perhaps as narrow-minded bigots! We will be hated (as Jesus was hated). We will be considered a nuisance to "common sense" living. But as long as we Christians are in the world on the terms of the secular world, our "witnessing among friends" will be lip service.

When will we learn to behave on the terms of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ? When are we going to *practise* our belief that Jesus Christ is the Light of the world? At present we are busy in the world mainly by the "light"(?) of secular humanism. When will the Church of Jesus Christ be known (by the world) as the shining light, set on a hill, visible to all?

I would love to see on my church's agenda seminars dealing with what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ in the world. Are we willing to listen? Willing to change our lifestyles? Prepared to follow Jesus and take up His cross? And deny ourselves unto death? If not, your denomination or mine may meet its membership goals, but we will be salt that has lost its flavour.

Syrt Wolters is a part-time barber in Victoria, B.C.

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Massive conversions reported among Chinese students

Ron MacMillan

HONG KONG (NNI) — Chinese students in Beijing are reportedly converting to Christianity virtually "by the dorm," according to two Chinese students who spoke to NNI during a brief stopover in Hong Kong en route to Australia where they plan to settle.

"[Since] June 4," one student said, "the rate at which students are turning to Christ is literally a dormitory at a time," (a dormitory usually houses a total of eight students). He added, "Some departments within certain colleges have changed their whole atmosphere because so many have become Christian."

The two students, however, were reluctant to release too many specific details regarding what they termed a massive growth because they are convinced that "a tough crackdown upon Christians, especially house church Christians, is expected very soon." They claimed to have access to Communist Party contacts who had warned them of the impending campaign due to start at the beginning of 1990.

The two students said ideological pressure has increased since the beginning of the new school term in October. Every student has been forced to submit a detailed "confession" of his or her activities during the pro-democracy demonstrations, and students must attend weekly classes in ideology. First year students at Beijing's premier Beida University, have been required to take a year's military training with the army at the Shijiazhuang Military Academy.

The students told of growing surveillance on the campuses in Beijing "especially over the last 10 days of November." Dormitories were being unexpectedly raided by special units from the Public Security Bureau, trained to spot anything "ideologically impure."

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Cinema summaries

Marian Van Til

Steel Magnolias

Rated PG
Stars Sally Field, Dolly Parton, Shirley MacLaine, Daryl Hannah, Olympia Dukakis, Julia Roberts
Directed by Herbert Ross; screenplay by Robert Harling, from his play

Robert Harling, author of this film's screenplay and the play on which it is based, grew up in Louisiana where the state flower is the magnolia. The southern magnolia tree is noted for its beautiful white blossoms and sweet fragrance. Harling's feeling about the women he knew growing up is that they are *steel* magnolias: they give the impression of fragile beauty, perhaps, but underneath they are strong, gritty people who hold things together and keep life steady.

Harling wrote his play while grieving for his not-long-married sister whose life ebbed away due to complications related to diabetes: a kidney transplant and having borne a child which doctors had warned against.

Harling himself is not in the story. He focuses on the steel magnolias in his life: his sister, and his mother and her friends who meet weekly at the local beauty shop owned by one of the women. The beauty shop is forum, hostel, psychiatrist's couch and social centre for the women — as it still is in many small towns across North America.

There are male characters, but *Steel Magnolias* presents its story mostly from the female perspective and it revolves entirely around relationships, through good times and bad: friend to friend, neighbour to neighbour, employer to employee, mother to daughter, wife to husband, girlfriend to boyfriend.

One of the film's weaknesses is its peripheral treatment of the male characters. There seems to be little time to flesh them out; they seem one-dimensional. The film would have been better dramatically if it had dispensed with the male characters all together, making appropriate references to them in conversations. It could then have developed its women even more and not short-changed the men.

Equal but different

But that would not have gone over well with general movie audiences. The film would then have been seen strictly as a "women's movie." Unfortunately some people are even now tending to think of it in those terms. (Are the hundreds of movies that have virtually all-male casts considered "men's movies"?)

Steel Magnolias is not as profound as it could be, but does open a window on female behaviour, friendships, and responses to conflict and grief, the better understanding of which will benefit all of us. (Yes, there *are* uniquely male and uniquely female approaches to friendship and even to moral problem solving, researchers' studies have proven — approaches which result not just from being "socialized" differently, but from the distinct ways male and females develop psychologically.)

This film has special appeal for women, true; but it will likely be enjoyable (and instructive) to men as well. Though there's plenty of pathos near the end, much of *Steel Magnolias* is very funny.

The actors — Sally Field (the mother), Julia Roberts (the daughter), Dolly Parton (the beauty shop owner), Daryl Hannah (a hairdresser), Olympia Dukakis and Shirley MacLaine (wealthy friends of the other women) — work very well as an ensemble. Each brings to her role a distinctiveness which makes her character a real person who is very different from each of the others yet is bound to the others as much by common values as common geography.

One of the film's major flaws is its last-minute attempt to examine one of life's perplexing questions (for Christians and non-Christians alike): Why must young people die? And how do we cope with the grief we feel over such tragically truncated lives?

One of the answers given to the grief-laden mother is that she should take heart because her daughter "is with her King," Jesus. (The hairdresser was converted midway through the film and becomes a fanatical Pentecostal, presented satirically — though not viciously — with unrealistic exaggeration; later the film takes her more seriously. The other characters are apparently varying shades of Presbyterian.) While knowledge of a dead child's salvation is certainly a comfort, it doesn't answer all our questions, and the graveside scene between the women acknowledges that. But part of that scene (and the converted hairdresser as well) borders on being offensive.

Despite intense secularization, one can hardly make a film about small town life in the southern U.S. without comprehending the part that Christianity has played and still plays in the South's culture. Though Harling grew up there, he and director Herbert Ross don't seem to truly understand Christianity and how people work out their faith in their lives. That shows in how the film approaches the subject; and that is *Steel Magnolas'* other major flaw.

You are what you eat?

small talk

Alice Los

We are what we eat, or so they say. But are we? Our mothers told us to eat our spinach and did not give it a second thought. In those days they didn't have to. If they could afford it they would also happily feed us eggs and cream and butter and be pleased to see us put on a little weight. It would reflect their loving care and our robust health.

Of course, no one would be really rotund because we'd all get more exercise in one day than the average person now gets in a week. Wherever we went we walked or biked, and chores around the house also involved quite some muscle power. Washing windows (inside and outside!) was a *weekly* job which included hauling pails full of water and much bending and stretching.

Doing laundry was an even more demanding activity. It took a while before washing machines became common place appliances back in my native country, and until then washing days were marked by hard physical labour.

Therefore most of us were glad to sit down to some hearty fare at the dinner table. Also, most people of that generation had known the hard times of a worldwide depression and war and were only too happy to have some bacon and lard in the pantry again! They savoured their new-found physical strength and energy.

Old habits die hard, and so the next wave of mothers continued in similar fashion as they cared for their families. Those mothers are today's grandmothers. They found that slowly but surely they could afford some luxuries (such as cake and cookies) while their husbands did not have to work as hard for it. It was a development which all of us found hard to resist. In fact, we easily adjusted, and before long we all became familiar with ever richer and more varied foods — not to mention drinks.

Now, restaurants are rated for our consideration, cooking classes abound and cookbooks take up a separate section in bookstores. We have all invested in fancy kitchen machinery, most of which sits idle most of the time, because life is busy and it's easier to resort to the convenience foods. Today's children are far beyond the after-school-milk-and-cookies routine and grab a coke and chips instead. In the evening we may sit and watch the emaciated people of another continent on our TV screens and reach for a snack to deal with our guilt feelings.

As if all of these complexities are not enough, there's now also the ever-changing advice on what's good for us and what's not. As a generation we have developed high blood pressure and comparing cholesterol levels is in.

Even the tried and true apple-a-day has become suspect. Was it sprayed? If so, with what? Is our present day spinach free from pesticides? We strive to protect our hearts only to find that we may be courting other illnesses in the process.

Looking over our table one day and pondering the odds, I realized that the traditional and much abused mealtime prayer of children is very profound: "Lord, bless this food, for Jesus' sake, Amen." This prayer, if it also incites us to moderation while we eat and drink and makes us mindful of the poor to the point of actively caring for them, should afford us once again the God-given joy of having a meal together. May we also ever remain acutely grateful for the care God shows us in just such happy occasions.

Alice Los lives in Inkerman, Ont.

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Church

Marian Van Til, page editor

Young adults get a taste of missionary life

Photo: Paul Chega

Missionary Susan Porter (back) helps Summer Mission Program participants Ron Kok (l) and Dick Vander Vorst (r) with their discipleship materials.

Lori Walburg

Where else but in Africa can you fall asleep to the distant roar of lions? Or wade through a chest-high river with your belongings perched perilously on top of your head? Or barrel down a rough road at 130 kilometres per hour dodging potholes, with four adults sandwiched into a front seat built for three?

The lions may have been safely caged in a nearby zoo, but to the 17 young adults experiencing Nigeria for the first time, these wild animals represented the exotic side of being pioneers in Christian Reformed World Missions' newly established Summer Missions Program (SMP).

The brainchild of Gord Buys, recruiting assistant for World Missions, the program was designed to give those interested in missions a realistic look at a missionary's life.

"For the past several years Christian Reformed World Missions has been interested in establishing its own summer missions program for young people," says Buys. "In the past we've had to rely on other organizations to provide these experiences."

After training in both the U.S. and Nigeria, discipleship became the group's focus. Each person was to teach five disciples, or students, the basics of nurturing a young Christian — how to have a quiet time, pray, study and witness. As disciplers, the group's aim was to develop relationships with their students and to learn from them as well as teach them.

"Religion is a natural part of life in Nigeria," says Tim Salomons, one of the participants and a recent graduate of The King's College in Edmonton, Alberta. "It's natural for people to say what they believe, whether they are Muslim, or animist, or Christian. In North America we tend to say 'This is what I believe, but I may be wrong.' Religion is not a *part* of life in Nigeria; faith *is* life."

For the last month in Nigeria the group of 17 split up into four teams. One team focusing exclusively on medical mission work headed west to the Kambari region in Niger State, where they lived with missionaries and worked among the nomadic Avadi people. The other three teams went south to Gongola State to disciple young people in the towns of Wukari, Takum, and Donga

At this point the group really began to use its cross-cultural training. Their most useful reminder was the phrase "It's not wrong; it's just different." They had many occasions to recite the phrase to themselves: in church, where men and women sit separately; at the dinner table, where Nigerians chomp (with great relish) on chicken bones; out on the street, where men hold hands with men and women with women as a sign of affection and loyalty (while affection shown publicly between the sexes, even husband and wife, is frowned upon); and out in the "bush," where decent dress is a simple string of beads hung at the hips. The Nigerians, for their part, had to put up with North American women lacking head coverings and North American men wearing bracelets.

Faith in action

The most noticeable difference was the skin colour. Wherever they went, these North Americans were on display. They were a minority, but not in a negative sense. They were admired and followed everywhere by a swarm of children (with 50 per cent of Nigerians under the age of 15, there are many children). In the town of Donga, which has only occasional visits from missionaries, white skin became a testimony in itself. It wasn't long before the whole area knew about the "baturi" (white people) and why they had come to town.

When the teams were finally ready to put their training into practice, they each encountered different challenges and came up with some different approaches to discipling in their own areas. One team had too many students sign up for their three-week course, so they decided to teach two one-and-a-half week courses. Another team turned its disciples into disciplers, establishing a discipling program in the local church. Another team reached out to the community with drama.

Meanwhile, the medical team pursued a different kind of ministry taking patients as they came. The most common medical problem was malaria, but they also assisted in treating carbuncles, boils and dehydration. The most serious case involved a woman who had spilled kerosene on herself, burning her upper legs. The medical team also conducted a survey to establish infant mortality rates and learned after talking with about 80 women that malaria is the biggest killer of children.

"A person studying in medical school can easily get her head filled with visions of sophisticated technology and highly specialized training," admits Kirsten Van Staalduinen, a second-year medical student at the University of Toronto. "When I came to Nigeria I realized how much help can be given just by teaching the importance of cleanliness. Maybe simple soap is better than technology; maybe I could help more people by being involved in missionary medicine than by being a surgeon."

The group of Westerners — so used to the constant stimulation of radio, TV, books, and movies — also battled boredom. For the first time they understood North America as a "doing" culture — where people always had to be doing something. Nigeria, by contrast, is a "being" culture. They found it strange that their students would come to visit, not necessarily to talk, but merely to be in the same room to show their love with their presence.

The rewards of the summer, however, far outweighed any discomforts. Exposure to a young, poor, and struggling nation impressed upon the group the privileges and comforts found in Western nations. And when they asked themselves why white nations were rich and black nations were poor, the group struggled with the answer.

"This summer I have been humbled and made more dependent on God," reflects Phil Reinders, a student at Calvin Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan. "When you are cut off from the support with which you are accustomed, when you're living with malaria and no medical doctor, with an African sense of time and a North American sense of urgency ... well, it made me totally dependent on God. I have to remember this lesson back in North America."

The group members also found no consensus to the question of whether missions was their calling. For some, the summer confirmed their commitment to overseas missions. For others it served as a warning signal and made them ask if they could really cope with working in a foreign culture. For still others, the summer seemed to push them in a different direction — toward church work in the United States or urban ministries in Canada.

No person, however, escaped the call to be a missionary wherever he or she went. The greatest joy of the summer was experiencing spiritual growth. The SMP group may have returned with exotic stories of lions and poisonous snakes, with suitcases full of souvenirs and rolls of film, but the most lasting treasures of Nigeria, say participants, are sure to emerge in changed attitudes and actions, for Christ's call to missions was never more dramatically illustrated in one summer.

Lori Walburg, one of the 17 participants in the Summer Mission Program, is a graduate of Calvin College and is currently working on a PhD in English at the State University of New York in Binghamton.

REC launches revised library and textbook program

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (REC) — A program to assist needy seminaries of churches in the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) to build up their libraries has been re-invigorated by the REC's Commission for Theological Education and Interchange.

In the early 1980s, the REC assisted schools to order books at discounts and also raised funds to contribute books. Those two purposes have now been combined into one program, and new arrangements for ordering have been negotiated with North American Christian publishing houses.

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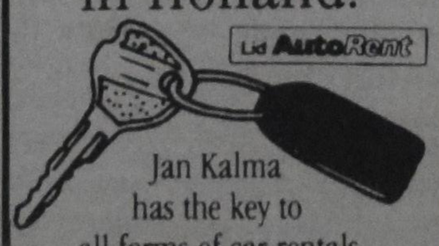

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A skeptical look at Calvinism

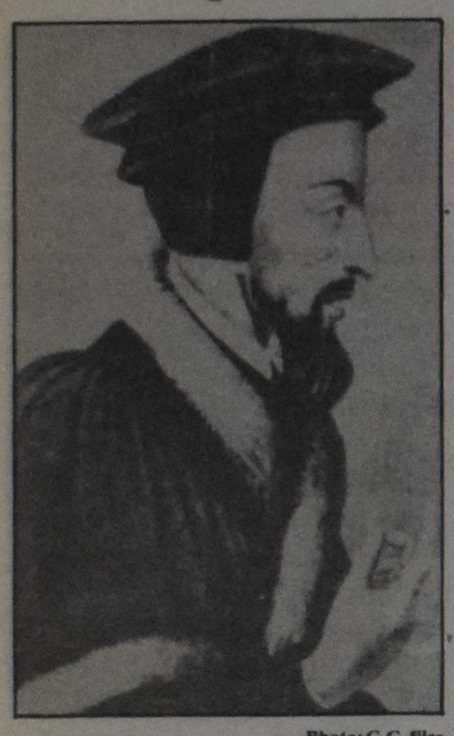

Photo: C.C. files
John Calvin.

Engbert Kolkman

I want to write about Calvinism, but not directly. I am afraid to. I often ask myself, "How does an outsider judge what a Calvinist is?"

I have read about an etching by a printer named De Vries in Delfshaven, which dates back to June 1787. It pictures something that happened two miles from my birthplace — Gelselaar, the Netherlands.

It's a true story and goes as follows:

A child was born to Lord van Heekeren of Westerflier. Westerflier was the name of the lord's estate (600 hectares), which lay in the Reformed church district of Laren. However, the lord decided to have his child baptized in Lochem.

The dispute

After the afternoon service on the Sunday that the van Heekeren child was baptized, the minister of Laren went to Westerflier to find out why the child had not been baptized in Laren. After all, Westerflier lay in his church district.

Lord van Heekeren and his guests — other lords and the minister of Lochem — were ready to begin their supper when the minister from Laren arrived. They had no choice but to invite him to join them. A toast was given to the crown prince. The minister of Laren went along with the toast. But he refused to join in a toast to the rulers of Munster. He was a *Kees,* which is a kind of revolutionary, sympathetic to the common people. His refusal led to an argument.

The minister from Laren had a gun and he managed to leave the house. But three lords ran after him and between the two bridges they nabbed him. The gun turned out to be only a knife. They dragged him back to the steps, and began to kick and stab him.

The mistress of the house sent a brave maiden to plead with them to stop, but she got kicked and pummeled.

The lords, however, did not know that there were two leadworkers on the roof. Since the brutal act happened right in front of the house, they witnessed it all, and helped bring the culprits to justice.

So much for the story.

This is what the etching portrays:

The preacher is lying on the ground on his back in all his glorious clothing. He is from high birth, but false compassion has turned him into a *Kees,* which is the name for a snarly dog of the common people. One lord sits on top of him, hand lifted for the blow. Others hold on to the minister, and even old grandpa gets in a kick.

Add to this the flying, horsehair whips. One servant with long curls looks on as a maidservant begs for them to stop. She gets kicked. The other minister merely looks on.

The door to the bedroom is wide open. The mistress lies on a big bed; the baby in full baptism clothing is drinking and the wet-nurse is upset.

They all knew the creeds by heart. But they used the methods of 17th century Calvinists.

Idolatry of "isms"

After every synod of the Christian Reformed Church I see that picture in my mind. The only thing not modern-day Reformed about the picture is a lord sitting on top of a minister and saying, "I am going to cut that bastard to pieces." Calvin was idolized by such people, and they ended up being racist, sexist, dogmatist and Calvinist.

Calvin was a great man. I have read some of his writings. But he only wanted to be a beacon of light, not an end in himself. Many of his followers have twisted his teachings into a cruel "ism."

Why not change your name, *Calvinist Contact?*

From an old skeptic farmer in Alberta.

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Christians protest Nigerian commission assisting Muslim pilgrims

LAGOS, Nigeria (NNI) — The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) says it will take the Nigerian military administration to the international court of justice in the Hague, the Netherlands, over the government's move to set up a pro-Muslim pilgrim's commission, which CAN considers "discriminatory."

CAN President Archbishop Anthony Okogie said in Lagos that the umbrella organization to which most Nigerian churches belong will be heading for the Netherlands-based world court because Nigerian courts, hamstrung by various military decrees, were unlikely to give his association a fair hearing.

CAN had brought a suit before a Lagos High Court against the Nigerian head of state, General Ibrahim Babangida and the minister of justice, Prince Bola Ajibola, saying the government's establishment of the pilgrim's commission and its functions favour Muslims, but discriminate against Christians.

Justice Olaseinde Silva, the Lagos High Court judge who heard the case, said his court could not legally rule on the suit because of a clause in the decree in question which states: "No question as to the validity of this or any other decree or of any edict shall be entertained by any court of law in Nigeria."

Decree No. 1, passed in 1984, established the Nigerian Pilgrims Commission which was charged with the "responsibility for the general welfare of Nigerians undertaking pilgrimage to el-Hajj or el-Umra or to both." The presiding judge, however, agreed with CAN that the decree discriminates against Christians and is capable of causing conflict among Nigerians in general.

In an amended writ of summons, CAN asked the court to declare the decree contrary to the proclaimed intention of the government to make laws for the peace, order and good government of Nigeria under the second section of Decree No. 1. It also asked the court for a perpetual injunction to restrain the government from implementing the decree.

Legal wrangling

But the government raised a preliminary objection to the suit immediately asking the court to dismiss it on grounds that the plaintiffs had no *locus standi* to institute the action and the court had no jurisdiction to hear it, while the suit itself was frivolous and an abuse of the court's process.

Ruling on the government's objection, Justice Silva said he was "in complete agreement" with CAN's lawyer, Chief Debo Akande, that members of CAN were persons aggrieved by the decree and, therefore, had *locus standi.* He added that besides catering exclusively to Muslims, the chairman and secretary of the commission established under the decree are to be paid salaries and remunerations, while part-time members would be paid allowances. All these, he said, are to be paid out of funds which belong to all Nigerians, including members of CAN.

Nevertheless, due to the lack of jurisdiction over the case, the opinion of the Nigerian court carries no legal backing. CAN will now take the case to the world court in The Hague for a ruling.

For Crossword puzzle and Calendar of Events see page 19

Report on Sexual Abuse

"To admit that the terrible evil of sexual abuse exists within the churches is hard. But we must acknowledge it, for only then can we deal with the fear, hurt and shame."

A report prepared by the Advisory Committee on Sexual Abuse appointed by Classis Niagara of the Christian Reformed Church, adopted on May 17, 1989.

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Features

We may not ignore the story of God's world

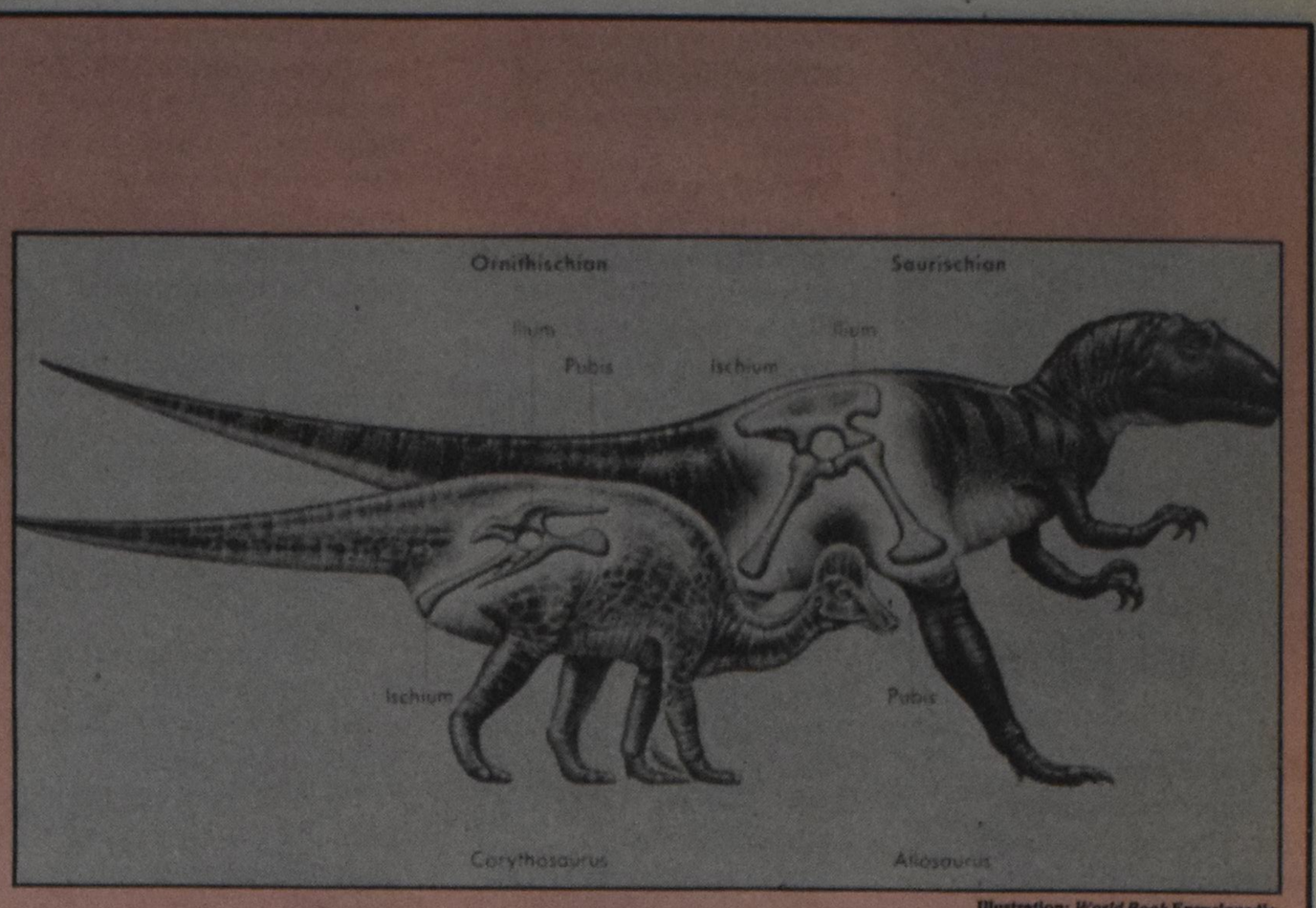


Illustration: *World Book Encyclopedia*

"Reliable information about dinosaurs was available when I was a lad, but I was not told about it."

Clarence Menninga

I remember that when I was very young, about 10 or 12 years old, I heard about people finding the fossil remains of some strange creatures — probably dinosaurs — in the western parts of the continent. I also remember being told, "Well, those creatures never really existed, you know. Those stories are just the wild imaginings of ungodly scientists who are trying to lead God's people astray."

Since that time, I have seen many skeletons of dinosaurs in museums. I have visited Dinosaur National Monument in Colorado/Utah and Dinosaur Provincial Park in Alberta, and I have seen the fossilized bones of dinosaurs still partially imbedded in the rock in both of those places. I and some other members of my family have even done some digging in the hills north of Medicine Bow, Wyoming, where we had been told that fossil dinosaur bones could be found. We found some pieces of rib and a piece of leg bone.

Yes, the dinosaurs were real. No doubt about it. Dinosaurs are (or were) God's creatures, just as much as birds and lions are. God cared for them, just as he cares for the beasts of forest and field today. The history of dinosaurs is his story, too. Reliable information about dinosaurs was available when I was a lad, but I was not told about it. Do you suppose that there might be some misinformation about dinosaurs which is still being published today? For the sake of our children, and for ourselves, we should do our best to provide reliable information about the world we live in; it's God's world.

Inches of dust?

Perhaps you have read reports which claim that the moon is young, not more than several thousand years old. That interpretation of the moon's history is based on the expectation of scientists that an old moon would have a considerable amount of dust on its surface, coupled with the reported information that the Apollo astronauts found only a thin layer of dust on the moon, up to three inches thick. But is it true that the dust layer on the moon is only three inches thick?

I checked up on that reported information. The *World Book Encyclopedia* reports that the layer of lunar soil (dust-sized particles, with some rocks and boulders mixed in) "is generally from 5 to 20 feet deep on the lunar maria." (The maria are the darker, smoother parts of the moon's surface, the "seas.") Some of the Apollo landings were in the lunar highlands, and the *NASA Scientific Reports* from those missions report that the lunar soil is generally about twice as thick on the highlands as it is on the maria. A paper published in the *Proceedings of the Fourth Lunar Science Conference* reports that the blanket of lunar soil ranges from 20 feet (6.2 metres) to 120 feet (39.6 metres) thick in the region where Apollo-17 landed.

Obviously, the report of "up to three inches" of dust on the moon is very different from the report of "generally from five feet .... up to 120 feet" of dust on the moon which is stated in the *World Book Encyclopedia* and the paper from the *Proceedings of the Fourth Lunar Science Conference.* Which do you suppose is correct?

If we are interested in finding out how old the moon is, does it make a difference if we have the correct information about the thickness of the dust on the moon? It certainly does. The history of the moon is God's story, too, even if that history tells us that the moon is very old.

The story of salt

You may have heard of reports which claim that the layers of sedimentary rocks (sandstone, shale, limestone) on the earth, at least those layers which have fossils in them, were deposited during the flood which is described in Genesis chapters 6-8. We also have learned some things about those rocks and fossils by the study of the rocks and fossils themselves. The history that we tell about the rocks ought to fit the available information.

Does a flood history fit the observations for the rocks that we find on the Earth?

In Michigan, for example, there are layers of rock salt below the surface in much of the Lower Peninsula. Salt is mined in the region near Detroit. There are also many rock layers in Michigan which contain fossils, and fossil-bearing rocks are found below, above, and between those layers of rock salt. If all of those fossil-bearing rocks were deposited during a single flood, the salt must have been deposited during that same flood. Salt will readily dissolve in water, as we all know. How do you suppose layers of salt could be deposited during a flood?

Do such observations have to be considered when we are trying to learn about the history of the rocks? Of course they do. The history of the rocks is God's story, too.

Use the information

It has sometimes happened that Christians have tried to tell us what God's world is like, while they failed (or refused) to make use of information about that world which was available to them. Sometimes they have even appealed to being "true to the inspired Scriptures" in defending those incomplete views. Christians who opposed the notion that the Earth is round, and Christians who opposed the notion that the Earth moves around the sun are well-known examples.

But such attempts to lock ourselves into our ivory towers and to proclaim what God's world is like, without ever looking at God's world itself, have not worked well in the past. Rather, those uninformed, unseeing proclamations have been an embarrassment to Christianity. Similar attempts to dictate the history of God's world from the ivory-tower perspective, without considering the information obtained by observing God's world itself, are not likely to serve us any better in our present situation.

We must consider the reliable information which has been obtained by observations of the world itself if we want to get our thinking about its history straight. I think that John Calvin gave us good advice when he said (in his introduction to his *Commentary on Genesis),* "God, who is by other means invisible, is made known to us by his works." ... Therefore, let the world become our school, if we desire rightly to know God."

Scripture guides us

Observations don't interpret themselves automatically. We humans must do the interpretation. When new observations come to our attention, we don't always know immediately how they can be fitted into an interpretation which makes good logical sense. Such interpretation takes time and effort. While we are working at developing such an interpretation, however, we must not ignore or dismiss those observations themselves.

As Christians, we are also obligated to fit those observations and pieces of reliable information together in a way that is consistent with our confession that the Creator and Governor of the universe has revealed himself to us in the scriptures, and therefore scripture provides the perspective or framework within which we must do that interpretation.

As John Calvin taught us, the scriptures serve as "spectacles" which clarify our vision when we look at the world. But we must remember, when we are trying to find out what God's world is like and how God's world got to be like it is, that the scriptures are spectacles that we look *through* to view the real world out there; they are not eye patches with pictures painted on the inside for us to look *at* while we remain blind to the world itself.

Understanding history

We could live happily, and we could successfully pursue many of our interests, even if we didn't know about the history of the moon and rocks and fossils and Neanderthals. We could probably raise a good crop of corn or tomatoes without knowing about that history. We could certainly be devout Christians without knowing about that history; many people of past generations have been devout in their Christian faith even though they did not have all of the information about our world that we know about today.

But if we want to have an understanding of the history of God's world which is as undistorted as possible, then we must keep all of the available information about that history clearly in mind. And because our understanding of history makes important contributions to our thinking in Christian theology, I don't think that we could do theology very well without considering the information which we have gotten from observing God's world itself.

If we don't have all the important information about the history of God's world, or if some of our supposed information is unreliable, we will certainly miss some important parts of God's story. Because we are finite, imperfect creatures, we cannot claim that we possess all the important information about the world's history; we must keep our senses open so that we can continue to learn more of the important information which comes through observations of that world itself. With some time and effort, and with lots of help from others, we can do the necessary checking of reported information in order to make sure that it is reliable.

God deserves to be honoured and praised for his handiwork in making this world to be what it is. This world is God's world; its history is his story.

Dr. Clarence Menninga is a geology professor at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Musical book connects Toronto and Dordt College

Robert VanderVennen

TORONTO — A young Toronto composer and an award-winning writer of children's books were brought to Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa, by Scholastic-TAB Publications in a public event that Adrian Peetoom describes as "absolutely smashing."

The event was a multimedia artistic program which capped the production of a unique children's book that includes music on a cassette tape.

The book is the brainchild of composer Irene Eugen, a 1987 graduate of the University of Toronto Faculty of Music. She collaborated with Vlasta van Kampen, writer of children's books, to prepare the story, pictures and music for a children's book titled *Orchestranimals*. Scholastic-Tab decided to publish it, so editor Adrian Peetoom, a regular contributor to *Calvinist Contact* worked with them on putting it together.

They needed to record the music, of course. Peetoom has a high regard for the music produced by Dordt College, so he arranged to take the composer and author to northwest Iowa for the recording.

The music was performed and taped at Dordt in early September by the Sioux County Orchestra, a community orchestra based at Dordt College and conducted by Dordt professor Henry Duitman. In four intensive days, the taping was done on the campus using new digital recording equipment which had been bought for Dordt's radio station, KDCR, by music producer Jim Bolkema. The tape was then edited and produced in Toronto.

Having learned the music, the orchestra decided to perform it as a 35-minute suite at a concert in November in Dordt's chapel. The music was narrated by Dordt theatre professor John Hofland. Art professor Jo Alberda made slides of the colourful book illustrations which she arranged to be projected on a large screen for the audience to see while the music was played.

Spellbound

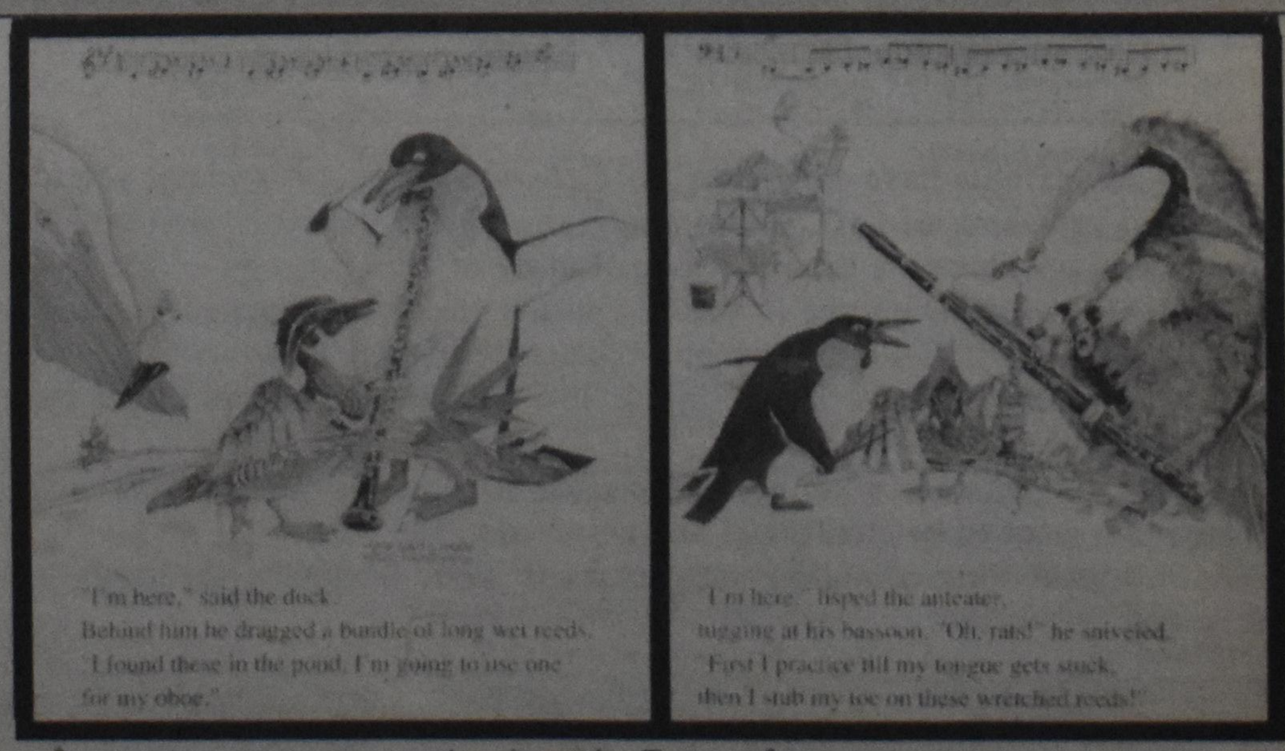
The first of two performances was an afternoon concert for 1,000 spellbound Grade 4 and 5 elementary school children who came from miles around. The next night the chapel was jammed with 1,500 people of all ages, including many brothers and sisters of children who saw it the day before.

Duitman felt that the effect was "spectacular." Composer Eugen and her parents came from Toronto and were delighted. "I never dreamed that the work would be learned so quickly and so well," said Eugen of the orchestra's efforts.

Peetoom was delighted that the entire college rallied to the project. "It could only be done at a Christian college," he said. "People went well beyond what was asked of them."

The characters in the story are animals, and each character is portrayed by a musical instrument, somewhat in the fashion of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*. Each animal and its instrument are creatively introduced in solo fashion, and later they are all brought together.

Early sales of the book are very strong, says Peetoom. The hardcover edition, which sells for $20, is already being reprinted. The book will be reviewed in a future issue of *Calvinist Contact*.


"I'm here," said the duck.
Behind him he dragged a bundle of long wet reeds.
"I found these in the pond. I'm going to use one for my oboe."
"I'm here," lisped the anteater,
tugging at his bassoon. "Oh, rats!" he sniveled.
"First I practice till my tongue gets stuck,
then I stub my toe on these wretched reeds!"

Composer Eugen immigrated to Toronto from Romania with her parents. Her mother is a concert pianist, her father a visual artist, and her grandfather a composer. Author van Kampen is a Czech immigrant married to a Dutch-Canadian. She is a winner of the Governor General's Award for Art.

Issue

Is there hope for wandering covenant children? (1)

Who are these children?

Dick Farenhorst

Many readers have expressed appreciation for the series of three articles entitled "Why not all my children go to church anymore" (Oct. 20, 27, Nov. 3) written by Adrian Peetoom. One of those who was grateful was Dr. Dick Farenhorst, director of Cascade Christian Counselling Association in Surrey, B.C. (Yes, Dr. Farenhorst is the eldest son of former C.C. editor Dick Farenhorst). Farenhorst was preparing for a workshop on the topic of wandering covenant children when Peetoom's articles began to appear. He agreed to share his findings with us. We publish them in a series of six short instalments, beginning in this issue.

Last fall my two-year-old son, David, died. One of the ways that I managed to cope with that terribly painful time was by thinking to myself that David is now whole again and with his heavenly Father who loves him very much. I remember thinking how great the pain must be for those parents who have lost a child and who suspect that child is not with God. I could only imagine their worry, their pain.

So, it's with some reluctance that I'm writing this article, because somehow I feel that only deeply spiritual, hurting parents can truly write about this topic. Adrian Peetoom truly did us all a service with his articles. Who was not moved by his poignant, pained reflections?

Upon request I've agreed to write this article, but I really can't talk from a first-hand experiential point of view. What I can talk about is my experiences as a therapist. My encounter in therapy with these "lost adult children" or with their parents whose children won't see me or, occasionally, with their grandparents who've shared their pain, more often in family visitation than in counselling.

Photo: Jeunesses Youth Juventudes

"What we interpret as rejection of the faith by our teenagers may simply be a case of counter-will."

Who are they?

While, typically, we think of our seemingly lost children as people who have left the church and their faith, there are, of course, many within the church. I'm thinking of a person I met the other day who goes to church because of the fear that she would have in not going, fear of God (if he's there), and fear of others' perceptions of her. Similarly, there is another person who is going but has never made a heart commitment and is basically going out of habit, and finding it necessary to be a good role model for his children.

Then there are those who are considered lost because the church and others consider them "lost," but likely God doesn't. I'm thinking now of the alcoholic woman who came to me a few weeks ago. She's currently in A.A. and no longer drinking, and she said to me, "You know, Dick, I can't be myself in church. I can't be a sinner. When I go to A.A. I can be myself, I can say I went and got drunk last night and I'm still accepted by people. At church everyone seems so good, I'm uncomfortable."

This woman goes to church infrequently but she loves her God.

There are also those going through a life-stage transition. For example, adolescence is a time for questioning and, more importantly for our purposes here, a time of counter-will. What we interpret as rejection of the faith by our teenagers may simply be a case of counter-will.

A good understanding of this dynamic is crucial, as otherwise it will be misinterpreted and mislabeled, resulting in parental reactions that will exacerbate the problem and adolescents distancing themselves from the church and the faith in reaction to their parental reactions. The reason for this is that a common manifestation of counter-will among Christian young people is an apparent rejection of the faith, as counter-will is often expressed in the very thing that is most desired or most expected by parents.

For instance, if parents feel cleanliness is extremely important, you can pretty much count on a teenager to be a slob. Similarly, if parents have much anxiety about the apparent rejection of the church they may respond to their children by becoming preachy and moralistic, or by starting to use pressure tactics, all of which provoke more counter-will.

Some different responses will be offered later, but an understanding of this natural, instinctive dynamic is crucial to a teenager's individuation; that is, the process of achieving a unique identity, becoming a separate individual. A similar pattern occurs among those going through a "mid-life crisis" transition where, again, much counter-will is experienced. All of a sudden, the expectations and responsibilities that the adult (typically male) has had, become experienced as a pile of "should's" and "ought to's" and resistance sets in.

Finally, there are those who don't go to church and who by all appearances have permanently abandoned their faith and have left their God.

Dr. Farenhorst is director of Cascade Christian Counselling Association in Surrey, B.C.

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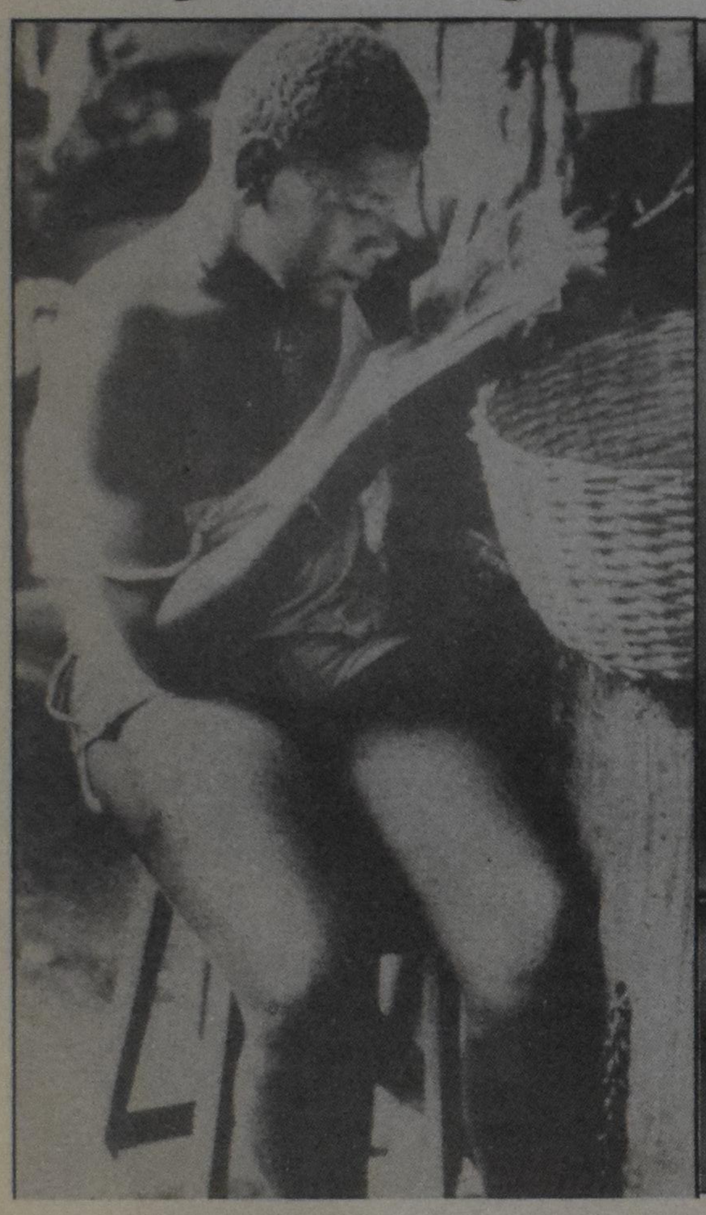
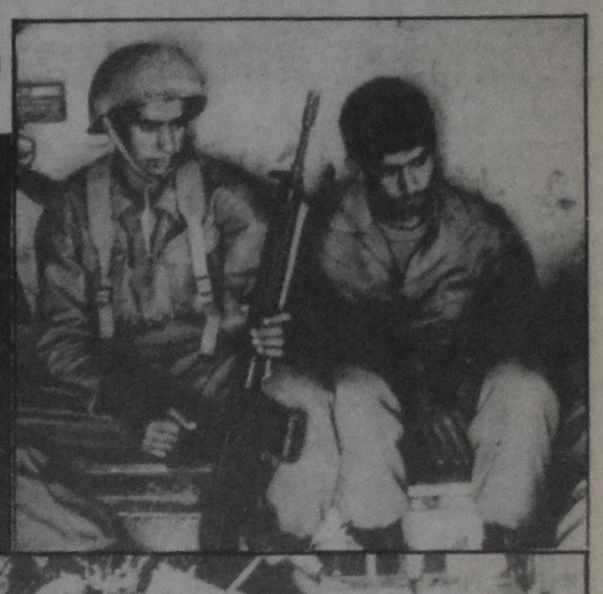
Mary's Song: In praise of radical change





Gerald Vandezande

Read: Luke 1:46-55

Two weeks ago, people all over the world wished each other a Merry or a Blessed Christmas. A week ago, millions of people wished each other a Happy New Year. You and I did the same within and beyond the Christian community. What did we and the other people mean to convey by these good wishes? Were they real or superficial?

Assuming for a moment they were heartfelt and sincere, what is the actual meaning of the *blessing* and *happiness* we Christians extend to our relatives and friends? Do these beautiful words give real purpose to our own life and that of our loved ones? Or are they merely *traditional* greetings with no *radical* significance for our everyday living?

I raise these questions now, at the beginning of a new year, while Christmas Day and New Year's Day celebrations are still fresh on our minds. I ask them in the context of the scripture passages we read, especially Mary's Song. This song is usually read before Christmas but seldom reflected on after Christmas, even though Mary's Song is one of the most energizing and inspiring passages in the New Testament. It is similar in spirit to Hannah's moving prayer in the Old Testament (see Samuel 2:1-10).

I read both passages from time to time. They give me a new hope and fresh perspective, especially when I get discouraged about all the problems that surround us.

Before I say more about the sweeping significance of Mary's Song for our calling as Christians living at the edge of the 21st century, I want to remind you that this powerful witness by unassuming Mary is right at the beginning of the apostle Luke's first letter to "most excellent Theophilus."

The second letter, entitled The Acts of the Apostles, was also addressed to Theophilus, who reportedly was an educated, influential person. Why did Luke write this letter? "... So that you (Theophilus and all of us) may know the certainty of the things you have been taught" (Luke 1:4) "about all that Jesus began to do and teach" (Acts 1:1).

Furthermore, keep in mind that Mary is a humble person with no public influence whatever; but she has the faith to sing of God's help for his people while they live in poverty and suffer under the oppressive yoke of the Roman Empire in the days when Herod is king of Judea. Like Hannah, Mary is a woman who is deeply committed to doing God's will, even if it may mean suffering and death.

Deep faith, great vision

Mary's Song is both an inspiring outburst of joyful praise to God and an exciting prophecy filled with powerful promise for humanity. The Magnificat is a confession of deep faith and great vision. It is a hymn of praise to God, who can do all things, who has done "great things" for Mary personally and for all God's people communally, and who is making all things new, now and forever! For from God and through God and to God are all things. To God be the glory forever! Amen (see Romans 11:31).

Mary's remarkable response to God's faithfulness is a holy-spirited expression of thanksgiving for God's mercy — that mercy is sure from generation to generation and extends to all who fear God and seek to do God's will. Like her Old Testament sister Hannah, whose moving prayer also reads like a shout of triumph, Mary gives thanks for God's "mighty deeds." She exclaims, "My spirit rejoices in God my *Saviour*."

Redemption has come! Renewal has begun! Liberty is here! Captivity has ended!

God the Liberator has put to rout the arrogant of heart and mind! God the Lord of lords has torn imperial powers from their thrones! God the King of kings has swept away the high and mighty! God the Protector is doing justice and showing mercy! God the Rock is our refuge and our strength. "The Lord is the strength of his people," indeed!

God the Restorer has lifted up the humble! God the Provider has filled the hungry with good things! God the Good Shepherd sees to it that we lack nothing. The Redeemer has filled us with resurrection power, with good food, with good news so we can live the good life; that is, a life filled with goodness, with love and reconciliation, with justice and mercy.

Turning history upside down

But God the Righteous One has sent the rich away empty — with empty hands and empty minds. Why? Because their hearts, filled with hate and greed, would make no room for God's love and justice. Because they refused to walk in the way of truth and wisdom.

Mary's song of faith and victory tells of radical change and a complete reversal of human history. It is *not* the proud or the mighty or the rich who have the last word. Indeed, through Jesus the Messiah, God overthrows *all* arrogance, *all* pride and *all* power. The Almighty has the *ultimate* say in human history. "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the Kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:13, 14).

Mary knows that God's way of life and light is true and victorious. And so do all who know Jesus the Saviour; who live out of the power of the resurrection; who follow the way of grace and truth; who act in the spirit of Christ who is the Life and Light of the world; who do justice, show mercy and walk humbly with God in every area of life, every day of their lives.

The message is clear: Christ is the hope of the world. Therefore, we *do* have hope. Therefore, we have nothing to fear. We do have forgiveness and we do have life, for Christ has overcome sin and has conquered death. Writes Paul: "You have been given fulness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority .... God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins ...; he took it [the written code with its regulations] away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the principalities and powers he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Colossians 2:10-15).

Over against the way of death and its curse so evident in arrogant intellectualism, rampant hedonism, worsening materialism and pragmatism, Jesus offers the way of life and its shalom, so essential to a responsible economics and politics, to happy marriages and families:

Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.
Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they shall be called sons (and daughters) of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.

(Matthew 5:3-10)

A new order

Indeed, Christ came to overturn the old order — the order shaped by pride, by power, by greed, by wealth. Indeed, the Redeemer came to establish a new order. Christ came to bring radical redemption and total renewal! "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he (she) is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them." (2 Corinthians 5:17-19).

Continued on page 14 ...

Mary's Song: In praise of radical change

... continued from page 13.

That is the message of Christmas! God gave it to us. Listen to how the Apostle Paul continues his letter to the people of God in Corinth and to the Christians living at the edge of the 21st century: "And God has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:19-21).

That is the call of the gospel. The Word that became flesh must be enfleshed in us! In each of us personally, and in all of us communally! What a challenge! What a responsibility!

Listen once more to the Apostle Paul:

Brothers [and sisters], think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many of you were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things and the despised things — and the things that are not — to nullify the things that are, [to bring to nothing — RSV; to bring to naught — KJV; to overthrow the existing order — NEB], *so that no man may boast before him. It is Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord. (1 Corinthians 1:26-31)*

God set his saving work in motion. This saving work is one of total renewal. This renewal promised in Mary's Song really involves the downfall of the proud, the mighty, and the rich. Mary sings of God's help for God's people. God helped Israel in the past, God helped Mary and Joseph, and God will help us — today and tomorrow. God will be with us, always and everywhere, to the very end of the age! God is faithful even when we are unfaithful. God's goodness is endless!

Revolutionary message

Mary's Magnificat is of special significance to the weak and the needy. There is almost a revolutionary ring to the message that God has performed mighty deeds, that God has lifted up the humble, that God has filled the hungry with good things. It is truly liberating to know that God has brought down rulers from their thrones, that God has sent the rich away empty, that God has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. Some gift! Some message! Some ministry!

Jesus' ministry of liberation and reconciliation was very comforting and empowering to Mary and Elizabeth, to their many poor sisters and brothers who were being oppressed and persecuted then, as it is today to the millions of poor and powerless neighbours who suffer so terribly at the hand of ruthless power-brokers and under the iron yoke of violent structures; not only in South Africa and South America but also in Canada and the United States; not only because of what others do but also because of what we do or don't do.

Mary's Song of salvation and resurrection in Christ is a source of tremendous comfort and joy to me, especially when the going gets rough. I pray that God's word of hope and mercy will continue to encourage and strengthen each of us, and all God's people everywhere, as we struggle for justice, yearn for freedom, hunger for righteousness or search for peace in the power of the Prince of Peace!

The words of Zachariah's song say it so well:

Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has come and redeemed his people ...
because of the tender mercy of our God,
by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven
to shine on those living in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the path of peace.
(Luke 1:68, 78-80)

Gerald Vandezande is public affairs director for Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ), Toronto.

Abortion hearings to commence January 30

Marian Van Til

OTTAWA — Hearings on Bill C-43, the "abortion bill," will begin at the end of this month, the government announced on Dec. 14. The bill would amend the criminal code.

According to a statement issued in November by the Minister of Justice, "The fundamental principle underlying the legislation is that abortion is a medical act requiring that consultation occur between a woman and her doctor to ensure that health grounds exist for an abortion and to allow for society's interest in the protection of the fetus."

The legislative committee which will conduct the hearings consists of 14 members of Parliament from across Canada, representing all three parties. (Some of them are: Dawn Black, NDP, New Westminster-Burnaby; Mary Clancy, Lib., Halifax; Benno Freisen, PC, Surrey-White Rock; Barbara Greene, PC, Don Valley North; Bob Kaplan, Lib., York Centre; Shirley Maheu, Lib., Saint Laurent-Cartierville; Peter McCreath, PC, South Shore; Rey Pagtakhan, Lib., Winnipeg North; John Reimer, PC, Kitchener; Svend Robinson, NDP, Burnaby-Kingsway.)

The committee will be chaired by Marcel Danis who is deputy speaker of the House, chairperson of committees of the whole House, and MP for the constituency of Vercheres, Quebec.

Voice your views

Danis pointed out that those organizations and individuals who wish to submit briefs or be heard by the committee should "communicate with the clerk of the committee and inform her of their intentions no later than Friday, January 19, 1990." Briefs should be submitted in writing to the clerk and postmarked no later than Friday, Feb. 2, 1990.

Hearings will begin on Jan. 30 "with witnesses who have already made their interest known to the committee, including the Minister of Justice," the committee announced. Danis pointed out that the committee reserves the right to select which witnesses will appear.

Danis said letters and briefs should be forwarded to: Ms. Santosh Sirpaul, Clerk of the Legislative Committee on Bill C-43, Room 650, Wellington Building, House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6.

See page 19 for Calendar of Events

SPEND AN EVENING AT ICS THIS WINTER!

THE EMPOWERMENT OF SELF IN COMMUNITY: ISSUES IN PSYCHOTHERAPY

Mary VanderVennen, *Therapist, Christian Counselling Services*
Diane Marshall, *Therapist, Institute of Family Living*
James Olthuis, Ph.D., *Professor, Institute for Christian Studies*

Beginning with the conviction that the empowerment of self in community is the purpose of psychotherapy, this seminar intends to deal with a variety of issues that emerge in the practice of counselling. The aim of the course will be to create a forum, in which, from a biblical perspective, to explore theories, share experiences and develop strategies to enhance our ability to engage in the ministry of encouragement and healing.

TUESDAYS, 7 TO 10 P.M., JANUARY 16 THROUGH APRIL 17, 1990

SPIRITUALITY AND THE RENEWAL OF THE CHURCH

George Vandervelde, Ph.D., *Professor of Systematic Theology*

The aim of this course is to explore the communal dimensions of spirituality. Questions to be examined include the relationships of charismatic renewal to church renewal, charismatic gifts to professional leadership in the church, the role of women and men in ordained ministry, the task of the church in the face of the needs within and outside immediate community, and the unity and brokenness of the church at the local level.

WEDNESDAYS, 7 TO 10 P.M., JANUARY 17 THROUGH APRIL 18, 1990.

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What is a grandmother?

A third-grader wrote the following about grandmothers: A grandmother is a lady who has no children of her own. She likes little girls .... Grandmothers never say hurry up. They don't have to be smart, only answer questions like: "Why do dogs hate cats," and "How come God isn't married?" They wear glasses and can take off their teeth and gums. They don't talk baby talk like visitors do because it is hard to understand. When they read to us they don't skip or mind if it's the same story over and over again. Everybody should have one, especially if you don't have a television, because Grandmas are the only grownups who have any time for children.

Confused about Tax Credits and Charitable Giving?

Tax reform introduced in 1988 (your April, 1989 tax return) granted *Federal* tax credits of 17 per cent on the first $250 of gifts and a *Federal* tax credit of 29 per cent on all gifts over $250.

After these calculations are complete, to this lowered tax amount is added a *Provincial* tax, ranging from approximately 46 per cent to 58 per cent depending on the province. The amount of the Federal tax credit now *escapes* the application of the provincial tax.

Therefore, the true charitable tax credits are 17 per cent plus (approx. 50 per cent of 17 per cent = 8½ per cent) = approx. *26 per cent* (on the first $250 of gifts); 29 per cent plus (approx. 50 per cent of 29 per cent = 14½ per cent) = approx. *44 per cent* (on all gifts above the first $250)

In fact, except for the first $250, a $100 donation received a $44.00 tax credit (refund) and costs the donor only $56.

The credit is the same for people in all three tax brackets.

The limit that can be claimed in any one year is 20 per cent of income, but any excess donations can be used in any of the next five years.

If you have any questions or comments, call Harry Houtman of Christian Stewardship Services at (416) 598-2181.

Peter and Marja are IN

Dear readers:

Recently we requested feedback to our column about sabbaticals (Oct. 13, 1989). We have received two letters from Ontario which are printed below. Next week we'll share two letters from Alberta.

Dear P and M:

Now that my blood pressure is back down to its normal level let's approach this piece of nonsense with some sense.

Here's a fellow who's only been in the workforce 10 years and he would like to catch up on his reading, etc. Now he's envious of the benefits his pampered colleagues in the Netherlands have voted themselves, or rather have browbeaten their congregations into.

For starters, your friend is breaking the 10th commandment. Envy is one of the seven deadly sins.

Furthermore, you advise him to manipulate the system. You counsel him to approach two elders (the ones who always agree with him), who will help the consistory "see the light," who will in turn "educate" the church membership about the benefit of sabbaticals. As an office-bearer in the church I know how these things go. Pastors keep pushing for benefits and the laity pays the bills. The result is a clergy that is by and large an overpaid, pampered lot for what they produce..

Am I totally against sabbaticals? No! Twenty years ago we sent our pastor off for one whole year with full pay and benefits. The congregation voted 103-2 in favour. Why? Because he deserved the break after working hard for six years. No doubt there are others who deserve an extended break.

What I'm against is having such "breaks" regulated and placed as employment conditions in the church order. I have supervised personnel in a corporation employing 35,000 persons and it is usually the underachievers and mediocre performers that are first in line to claim their "benefit" as a "right." I can see the same happening in the church if synod ever makes sabbaticals a regularly scheduled benefit in our clergy's remuneration package.

Lest you think I'm a cantankerous old curmudgeon, let me say that I like your column. Except in this instance, it offers very sensible advice.

Dear P and M:

Although I am not a pastor I have worked with enough of them to feel free to suggest that churches seriously consider a three-month sabbatical every five or seven years. Sabbaticals should become the rule.

You fear that if you would ask for a sabbatical eyebrows would be raised. You're quite right. Not all councils would see the need although elders and deacons know better than anyone else what's involved.

Besides the many pleasures and blessings a pastor derives from his work in the congregation, there's also much pressure, frustration and depression. A business man dealing with an unpleasant, demanding, complaining client can tell that person to fly a kite or take his business elsewhere. A minister just cannot do that. Like it or not he has to be everything to everyone.

In general, we are not too generous in our praise, but if we think we have a legitimate complaint we're on the phone immediately, even if it's about something as small as using different musical instruments in the service. Our pastors spend hours and hours with those who are depressed, have marriage problems and are grieving. They listen to parents who can't get along with their teenagers and children who can't get along with their parents. The list of things that contribute to his stress level could go on for 10 pages.

Sabbaticals would go a long way towards helping our pastors cope with the pressures of ministry.

Peter and Marja Slofstra are a pastor and wife team living in St. Catharines, Ont. They are assisted by an advisory panel consisting of: Sam Da Silva, Ineke Brouwer-Parlevliet, Tom Zeyl, Bert Witvoet.

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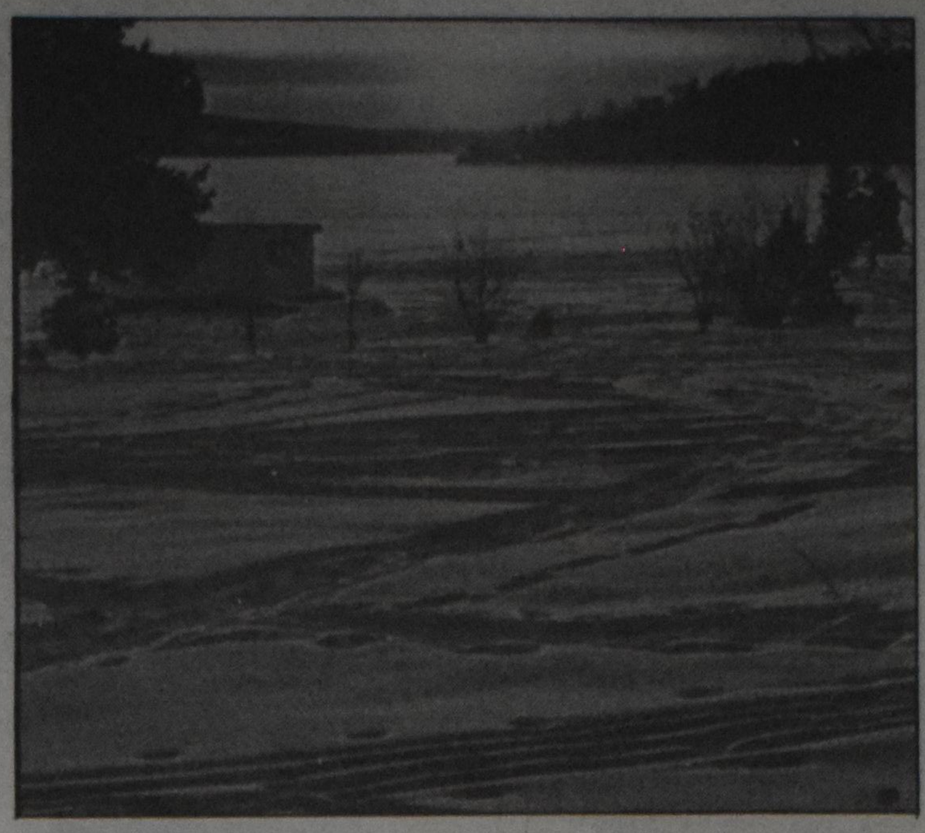
The Coming of Winter

I watch the sky above as winter's cloud
Draws near upon the North Wind's chilling breath;
He looks my way but once and laughs out loud
To see earth vainly fight an icy death.
I shiver as he runs his frigid hand
Across the golden fields and crimson leaves,
While glassy footprints punctuate the land,
And frosty fingers blanch the golden sheaves.
I bring my woollen coat around my chest
And pull my muffler tightly to my face.
The North Wind frowns to see me snugly dressed
And walking briskly towards a sheltered place.
The thought of resting warmly by a fire
Will shield me nicely from the weather's ire.

David T. Koyzis
Hamilton, Ontario



LANDGOED TAXERING EN SCHOOLBELASTING

KENNISGEVING AAN ZAKEN-PARTNERSHIPS EN AAN BEDRIJVEN MET AANDELEN OP DE EFFECTENBEURS EN HUN DOCHTERONDERNEMINGEN

BEGINNENDE IN 1990 ZAL VOOR BOVENGENOEMDE BEDRIJVEN DE WIJZE WAAROP ZIJ HUN STEUN AAN SCHOOLBELASTING VERLENEN, VERANDEREN. DIT ZAL DE MANIER WAAROP DE BASIS VAN LANDGOED TAXERING VOOR HET OPENBAAR, ONAFHANKELIJK EN FRANS SCHOOLBESTUUR IS TOEGEWEZEN, BEINVLOEDEN.

- ZAKEN MET EEN PARTNERSHIP ZULLEN HET RECHT KRIJGEN OM EEN ONAFHANKELIJK SCHOOLBESTUUR, OF HET FRANSE SCHOOLBESTUUR IN OTTAWA-CARLETON TE STEUNEN, VOORZOVER HET PARTNERSHIP OF DOOR ONDERSTEUNERS VAN ONAFHANKEIJKE SCHOLEN OF DOOR ONDERSTEUNERS VAN FRANSE SCHOLEN WORDT BEDREVEN. TOT NU TOE MOESTEN ALLE PARTNERS ROOMS-KATHOLIEK OF FRANSGEZIND ZIJN EN MOESTEN BEIDEN TOESTEMMEN.

- DE LANDGOED TAXERING VAN BEDRIJVEN MET EFFECTEN EN HUN DOCHTERONDERNEMINGEN ZAL VERDEELDT WORDEN ONDER OPENBARE EN ONAFHANKELIJKE SCHOOLBESTUREN IN HETZELFDE GEBIED EN IN OTTAWA-CARLETON ONDER HET OPENBAAR, ONAFHANKELIJK EN FRANSE SCHOOLBESTUUR, IN VERHOUDING TOT WOONGOED EN BOERDERIJ TAXATIE PER SCHOOLBESTUUR. TOT NU TOE KON DE STEUN VAN EEN BEDRIJF VOOR EEN ONAFHANKELIJK SCHOOLBESTUUR OF HET FRANSE SCHOOLBESTUUR IN OTTAWA-CARLETON NIET HET AANDELEN BESTAND IN HET BEZIT VAN ROOMS-KATHOLIEKEN OF FRANSGEZINDEN, OVERSCHRIJDEN.

OM DIT INITIATIEF TE IMPLEMENTEREN MOET HET "MINISTRY OF REVENUE" HUN ARCHIEVEN BIJWERKEN OM ZAKEN-PARTNERSHIPS TE IDENTIFICEREN DIE HUN SCHOOLBELASTING WILLEN VERDELEN. DIT GELDT OOK VOOR ALLE BEDRIJVEN MET AANDELEN OP DE BEURS EN VOOR HUN DOCHTERONDERNEMINGEN.

INFORMATIE OVER DEZE NIEUWE REGELEMENTEN ZULLEN U IN DE NABIJE TOEKOMST WORDEN TOEGEZONDEN, ALSMEDE EEN "NOTICE OF PROPERTY VALUATION". U WORDT VERZOCHT DEZE NIEUWE INFORMATIE TE BESTUDEREN EN NA TE KIJKEN OF HET "MINISTRY OF REVENUE" UW SCHOOL ONDERSTEUNING GOED HEEFT TOEBEDEELD. ALS DIT NIET OP DE JUISTE WIJZE IS GEBEURD, LAAT U HET ONS DAN WETEN. EEN ANTWOORD FORMULIER ZAL WORDEN BIJGESLOTEN.

UW MEDEWERKING ZAL EEN GOEDE BESTEMMING VAN UW SCHOOLBELASTING AAN DE SCHOOLBESTUREN IN UW GEBIED VERZEKEREN.

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Refugees start business venture in Calgary

CALGARY, Alta. (MCC) — In Honduras, Manuel was an architect. After coming to Canada as a refugee, he works sweeping floors.

Abner was a mechanic in his Central American country. His credentials are not recognized in Canada, so he works as a dishwasher.

Rodolfo was a broadcaster in Nicaragua, while Celesa was a lawyer in Honduras. They cannot find work in their professions. They work as janitors.

All of them are more fortunate than Ada, however. She was a nurse but now cannot find a job in that profession. She lives on welfare.

Twice a month meetings are being held at the MCC-supported Calgary Centre for Newcomers to try to find solutions. The meetings were suggested by the Central Americans themselves. From their home countries, they are familiar with the idea of co-operatives. From their work here, they are familiar with the janitorial business. They asked the centre to help them organize a co-operative so that they could run their own business without a middleperson taking profit out of what they earn.

The result has been an application to the Alberta Co-operative Branch for registration. The group has conducted a feasibility market study, decided by-laws, and met with three Mennonite church members who manage cleaning companies to get business advice.

"It has been interesting to observe the process of discussion that has taken place as the group tried to find ways to help themselves and others," says Ted Walter, director of the newcomers centre. "It has been evident from the beginning that their goal is not only to help new immigrants to become economically secure but also to help them achieve a sense of self worth."

The dream of many in the group goes beyond the present plan, notes Walter. They see the co-operative expanding to initiate many other business enterprises that will help many other immigrants to experience a good living in their newly adopted country.

The group has chosen a name for their co-operative: Esperanza — hope. Walter agrees it's a fitting name.

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Non-subscribing newlyweds whose wedding announcement with their future address appears in *Calvinist Contact* will receive a letter offering a first-year subscription for only $15.00! To facilitate matters, we encourage those who request and pay for the wedding announcement to enclose $15.00 and the couple's future address.

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Thanks

VAN ROOYEN:
We would like to thank everyone who remembered us on our 60th wedding anniversary. Thank you for best wishes, cards and flowers. Special thanks to God for such a beautiful occasion. We wish all of you a blessed and prosperous New Year.
Mr. and Mrs. D. van Rooyen, South Chatham Village, Chatham, Ont.

Birthday

Congratulations Mr. Bandstra on your 85th birthday.

BANDSTRA:
Dear Dad and Pake. We wish you a very special day on your 85th birthday. May our Lord bless you with good health for Mom and all of us in the years to follow.
Love from your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.
Home address: O. Bandstra, R.R. #2, Newcastle, ON L0A 1H0.

Anniversaries

Congratulations to Jouke and Tine Kramer (nee Elgersma) on their 50th wedding anniversary.

Wirdum (Fr.) Ingersoll
1940 January 17 1990

JOUKE and TINE KRAMER
(nee Elgersma)

You have shared 50 years of your lives. In those years you have witnessed, and been part of, a six-year war, immigration, the tumultuous and busy raising of nine children, working together on the family farm, celebrating the joys of good things happening, sharing disappointment when setbacks occurred. You have been involved in building up the church and supporting Christian education in many different ways. You have been free from want. You have been a part of victories and defeats in your children and grandchildren's lives.
It's wonderful to be able to share this event together. We honour and praise the Lord for his love and faithfulness.
"Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth." (Ps. 124:8)
Jack & Jan — Innerkip, Ont.
Anne — Guelph, Ont.
Andy & Agnes — Ingersoll, Ont.
Gertie & Wayne — Ingersoll, Ont.
Joe & Jenny — Ingersoll, Ont.
Peggy & Dave — Cleveland, Ohio
Grace & Jan — Ingersoll, Ont.
Dirk & Anneke — Ingersoll, Ont.
Nynke — Mississauga, Ont.
and grandchildren and great-grandchild.
We invite you to celebrate with us on Saturday, Jan. 13, 1990. Open house from 2:30-5:30 p.m. at the Mount Elgin Community Hall (Hwy. 19, south of Ingersoll). Best wishes only.
Home address: 265 Harris St., Ingersoll, ON N5C 1Y5.

Obituaries

When we are called to part,
it gives us inward pain;
but we shall still be joined in heart,
and hope to meet again.
The Lord, in his infinite wisdom, called to eternal glory our dear friend

THEO BUSCHMAN

From sorrow, toil and pain,
and sin, we shall be free;
and perfect love and friendship
reign
through all eternity.
We pray that the Lord may comfort Nel and the children in the loss of their husband and father.
Montreal, December 1989
Carl & Margo Bastian
John & Akke Jellema

Anniversaries

Belleville Ottawa
1960 1990
With praise and thanksgiving to our heavenly Father we announce with joy that our parents

MELIS and LYDIA KOOMANS
(nee Jongenotter)

hope to celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary on January 16, 1990.
With love and congratulations from:
Eric — Ottawa
Linda — Hamilton
Paul & Karen — Hamilton
Elisabeth — Ancaster
Home address: 881 Mountainview Ave., Ottawa, ON K2B 5G1.

1950 January 18 1990
Exodus 33:15
Then Moses said to him, "If your presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here."
We thank God for his abiding love shown also in the wonderful marriage of our parents

JOHN and DERKIEN LUCAS
(nee Dyk)

The Lord willing, on January 18, 1990, they will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary.
We congratulate you, dear parents and grandparents, and pray that God will continue to bless you richly.
George & Betty Lucas — Oro Station, Ont.
Audrey, Anthony, Lori, Kerry, Christine
Mark & Linda Mallette — Metcalfe, Ont.
Michael, Brian, Jimmy, Steven
Meindert & Rita Prins — Georgetown, Ont.
Garrett, Diana, Evelyn
Bernie & Annette Smit — Oro Station, Ont.
Lucas, Cameron
Harry & Christine Lucas — Oro Station, Ont.
We welcome their friends and relatives to an open house to be held in their honour at Covenant Chr. Ref. Church, 101 Ardagh Rd., Barrie, Ont., on Saturday, Jan. 20 from 1:30 to 4:00 p.m.
Home address: R.R.#2, Oro Station, ON L0L 2E0.

For Rent

Four-bedroom detached home for rent in Holland Marsh, Ont. $750 per month plus utilities. Available January 1, 1990. Call (416) 775-2856 after 4 p.m.

Obituaries

On the Lord's Day Dec. 17, 1989, the Lord took home to her eternal rest, our dear mother, grandmother and great-grandmother

SIEMKJE ROFFEL

at the age of 85.
She was predeceased by her husband Jan in 1969 and one daughter Arentje in 1938.
"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Romans 8:18)
Sadly missed by:
John & Mabel Roffel
Cindy and Andy, Jack and Betty-Ann, John and Evelyn, Marianne and Rob
Harry & Diane Roffel
Judy and Mike, Nancy and Jim, Douglas, Brian
Attie & Meindert Koopman
Jim, John and Sue, Cindy, Carol, Mel, Mark
Anne & Harry Koomans
Richard, Dennis, Paul, David, Sylvia
nine great-grandchildren also survive.
The funeral was held in the Free Reformed Church of Chatham, Ont., on Wednesday, Dec. 20, 1989. Pastor Hans Overduin officiated.
Correspondence address: Mrs. Anne Koomans, 264 Indian Creek Rd. E., Chatham, ON N7M 5J6.

De Here heeft na een langdurige ziekte tot zich genomen onze vriend en medelid

BEREND JAN GERRITS

op de leeftijd van ruim 85 jaar.
Namens alle leden van onze Senior Citizens' Club "Eventide."
Mr. Gerben Van der Kloet, president
Mr. Kl. Muys, secretary
Kentville, Nova Scotia
Dec. 13, 1989.

Suddenly, on Dec. 16, 1989, in his 6th year,

BENJAMIN DANIEL VYN

went to be with Jesus.
Precious son of Martin and Anne. Dear brother of Jannelle, Joshua and Gabrielle. Beloved grandson of Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Vyn of Hamilton, Mr. and Mrs. William Veenhof of St. Catharines, Ont., and great-grandson of Mr. and Mrs. William Veenhof Sr. of Grimsby, Ont. Dear nephew and cousin of families Ralph and Joyce Vyn, Sid and Annette De Groot, Pete and Mary Vyn, Klaas and Wilma Klaver, Rene and Dorothy DeKok, Hank and Nelly Vyn, Harry and Thea Wiersma, Joe and Annie Hum, Howard and Jacquie Vanderwier, Paul and Diane Droppert, Henry and Heather Kikkert, Nick and Anita Veenhof and Bill Veenhof.
Our comfort rests in the loving character of our Father God who is the author of life, for Jesus said, "The thief cometh not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly. (John 10:10)
Funeral services were held on Dec. 19, 1989, at Ancaster Chr. Ref. Church, pastor R. TenBrinke officiating.
Correspondence address: Martin Vyn, R.R. #1, Caledonia, ON N0A 1A0.

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Obituaries

At his appointed time the Lord took unto himself after a lengthy illness our dear father and opa

BEREND JAN GERRITS

at the age of 85.
Predeceased by his wife Johanna Gerrits-Marsman.
"Want Gij zijt mijn heil, O Heer, 'k Blijf U al den dag verwachten."
Gerritdina & Henk Wittenberg — Kentville, N.S.
Albert & Janna Gerrits — Sheffield Mills, N.S.
Jack & Henny Gerrits — Sheffield Mills, N.S.
Joe & Janny Gerrits — New Minas, N.S.
Bill & Rinny Gerrits — Georgetown, Ont.
Siny & Don VanderLaan — Waterdown, Ont.
Tina & Chris Rombaut — Canning, N.S.
Gerrit & Barbara Gerrits — Coldbrook, N.S.
John & Arlene Gerrits — Sheffield Mills, N.S.
James & Linda Gerrits — Sheffield Mills, N.S.
47 grandchildren and 31 great-grandchildren.
Funeral was held Saturday, Dec. 16, 1989, in Kentville Chr. Ref. Church, Kentville, N.S., Rev. James Joosse officiated.
December 13, 1989.
Correspondence address: Tina Rombaut, P.O. Box 152, Canning, NS B0P 1H0.

At his appointed time the Lord took unto Himself two of our dear friends:
On November 30, 1989

WILLIAM (Wieb) ROOSENBOOM

at the age of 61.
On December 8, 1989

W. VICTOR KNIP

at the age of 61.
May the Lord comfort their wives, Els and Julie, and their children and grandchildren.
They will be missed and remembered by:
Gerry & Ann Boersma
Bert & Shirley Branderhorst
Peter & Sandra Damsma
Harry & Ann Klungel
Karen Knip
Art & Ann Kikkert
Larry & Bea Uyl
Peter & Willy Visscher
Funeral services were held at the Chr. Ref. Church, Exeter, Ont., on Monday, Dec. 4, 1989 and Monday Dec. 11, 1989. Rev. Robert Arbogast officiated.
Interment in Exeter cemetery.

On Dec. 19, 1989, after an eight-month illness at Montreal's Lakeshore General Hospital, God took home our courageous and remarkable husband, father and opa

THEODORUS JOHANNES BUSCHMAN

His steadfast love and faith will be forever cherished and remembered by his wife Nel Buschman, and children:
Ron & Teresa Buschman — Calgary, Alta., Brendon
Leona Buschman — Pierrefonds, Que.
Tanya Buschman — Pierrefonds, Que.
family and friends.
"His only comfort in life and death is that he is not his own but belongs with body and soul to his faithful Saviour Jesus Christ."
Funeral services were held on Dec. 22, 1989, at First. Chr. Ref. Church, Montreal, Que., Rev. Bill Kuurstra officiated.
Our heartfelt thanks to our church family and all our friends.
Correspondence address: Nel Buschman, 5033 Perron St., Pierrefonds, PQ H8Z 2J2.

Classified

Teachers

AGASSIZ, B.C.: Agassiz Christian School requires a **primary** teacher effective April 1, 1990, with a possible view for employment for the 1990/91 school year. Interested applicants please send resume and/or inquiries to: Mr. Rick Esselink, Principal, Agassiz Christian School, Box 323, Agassiz, BC V0M 1A0 Tel. (604) 796-9310 (school), (604) 796-3209 (home).

BRANTFORD, Ont.: Brantford Christian School invites applications for a **Grade 1** teaching position commencing March 1990. This could possibly lead to a single or doublegrade position next September. Please send applications to: Mr. C. VanderVeen, Principal, c/o Brantford Chr. School, 7 Calvin St., Brantford, ON N3S 3E4. Phone (519) 752-0433 (school) or (519) 752-4100 (home).

FRUITLAND, Ont.: John Knox Memorial Christian School has several teaching positions open for the 1990-91 school year. Sixty per cent special education teacher. Forty per cent music teacher. Full-time classroom teacher at the junior intermediate level. Address all inquiries and applications to: Mr. Julius de Jager, Principal, 795 Hwy. 8, Fruitland, ON L0R 1L0. Tel. (416) 643-2460.

Christian Education in Canada's Capital

OTTAWA, Ont.: If you are a specialist in **Remedial Education** or **Kindergarten,** are looking for new challenges and rewards, consider: **OTTAWA CHRISTIAN SCHOOL.** An opening is available March or September 1990. Please inform us about your abilities, ask about our needs. Write: Wm. Van Dyke, Principal, Ottawa Christian School, 2191 Benjamin Ave., Ottawa, ON K2A 1P6. Phone (613) 722-5836.

RENFREW, Ont.: Renfrew Christian School is in need of a **teaching principal** beginning September 1990. Please contact Hank Schaly, principal at: Renfrew Christian School, Box 818, Renfrew, ON K7V 4H2.

Help Wanted

Help wanted to work on potato farm in Taber, Alta. Must have or obtain truck driver's licence. House supplied. S.L.M. Spud Farms Ltd. Tel.: (403) 382-9386 or 223-8452 or 223-8111.

Full-time **housekeeper and nanny** wanted. There are four children in the family, ages 2-10 years. Please send references to: P.O. Box 69, Foxboro, ON K0K 2B0.

We need one full-time person (40 hrs.). Hours include one evening (Fri.), and every other Saturday. Work includes: serving customers, some typing, and all other aspects of Christian book selling. Requirements include a pleasing personality, willingness to work hard, eagerness to learn and a love for good books. Apply to store manager Mrs. Ina Klaassens or to owner Gerry Denbok: (416) 637-9151 (store), (416) 639-1075 (home).
The Family Christian Bookstore
750 Guelph Line, Burlington, ON
L7R 3N5

Help Wanted

CARING FOR KIDS Mutual Support Systems, a residential program for children, is looking for families in the Niagara Peninsula that would provide foster care for a child in their own home. Please reply to:
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Welland port, ON
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(416) 899-2311

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Miscellaneous

O.A.P. is looking for a companion to share a room to reduce the cost by $1,100.00 each for a trip to the Orient. Also for a cruise to Alaska to save $500.00 each by early booking and $800.00 for sharing a room. Lenie Verruyt, 670 Hess Crescent, Victoria, B.C. Phone 479-8351.

Teachers

Teachers

Toronto District Christian High School

One of our teachers is beginning a maternity leave on **March 19, 1990.** We are looking for a teacher to replace her for the remainder of the school year. The subjects to be taught are **French** and **Keyboarding.** Please send letters of application to:
Mr. Wm. Barneveld, Principal
TDCH, 7900 Kipling Ave.
Woodbridge, ON L4L 1Z5

Administrator/Principal

John Knox Christian School of Woodstock, Ont., invites applications for an **Administrator/Principal** position for the 1990 to 1991 school year. We are searching for an individual who is committed to a biblical, Reformed theology and educational perspective. Experience will be regarded as an asset. A profile is available upon request. Please send inquiries to:
SEARCH COMMITTEE
C/o John Knox Christian School
800 Juliana Dr., P.O. Box 243
Woodstock, ON N4S 7W8
Applications will be accepted until **January 31, 1990.** Contact Andy Luth at the following telephone number: (519) 424-9316.

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For more information call John or Dick at (604) 588-3973.

Help Wanted

Help Wanted

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(416) 598-2181

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- must be able to work with a team

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- support and assistance
- consultation and reporting
- other miscellaneous duties

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Call Laura MacDonald at (416) 293-2074 or mail resume to P.O. Box 70, Agincourt, ON M1S 3E2.

Researcher position available

Citizens for Public Justice seeks a researcher who can provide quality research consistent with CPJ's Christian public justice framework in areas of political, economic and social policy.

Duties to include: research, policy development, and presentation of policies to the Canadian public and government.

Current location is Toronto with a possibility of relocation. Position available February 1990. Salary approximately $25,000-$30,000.

Application deadline **January 24, 1990.**

For more information contact:
Citizens for Public Justice
229 College St., Suite 311
Toronto, ON M5T 1R4
(416) 979-2443

The St. Catharines Association for Christian Education
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effective August 1, 1990

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Send applications to:
Bert Bakker, Chairman of the Board
2 O'Malley Dr., St. Catharines, ON
L2N 6N7

Applications will be received until **January 31, 1990**

Events/Classified

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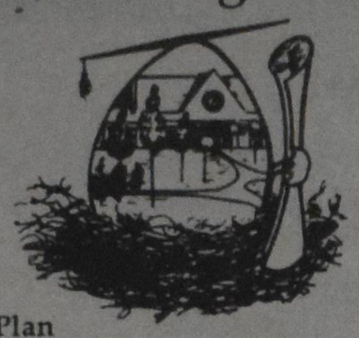

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A Christian university

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Ancaster, Ontario
L9G 3N6

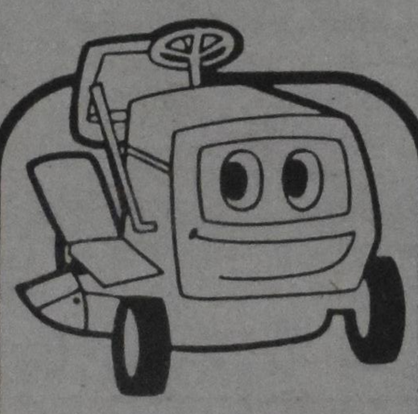
Close to the deadline — Fax it

Calvinist Contact now has a facsimile machine. Already, many people are making good use of this quick means of sending various communications. **Our Fax number if (416) 682-8313.**

We do ask those who submit communications to preferably send **typed** material, or otherwise messages written in **clearly legible, black print.** Include such information as name of sender, address, Fax or telephone number. Thank you!

Calendar of Events

Jan. 13	Organist David Palmer in concert at 8 p.m. at Redeemer College, **Ancaster,** Ont. Tickets are $9.00 ($7.00 for students/seniors). Phone (416) 648-2131.
Jan. 13	Conference on Liturgy and Music "Lent-Easter Worship" at Redeemer College, **Ancaster,** Ont. Registration $25 p.p. by Jan. 4. For info. phone (416) 648-2131.
Jan. 18	CFFO Board meets from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. in the CRC, **Georgetown,** Ont. For info. call (519) 837-1620 (a.m.) or (519) 338-3214 (p.m.).
Jan. 20	Concert by the 100-voice Canadian Orpheus Male Chorus at 8 p.m., Redeemer College, **Ancaster,** Ont. Tickets $10 at the door or call (416) 648-6585.
Feb. 9	"German Baroque & Beyond," a Stained Glass Concert with Boris Brott and the Amadeus Orchestra, featuring organist Christiaan Teeuwsen and the Redeemer College Choir. At 8 p.m., Redeemer College, **Ancaster,** Ont. Pre-concert lecture at 7 p.m. For tickets call (416) 648-2131.
Mar. 29	CFFO Prov. Board meets from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., CRC, **Georgetown,** Ont. For info. call (519) 837-1620 (day) or 338-3214 (p.m.).
Apr. 13	"Passion Concert," a Stained Glass Concert with Boris Brott and the Amadeus Orchestra, featuring organist Christiaan Teeuwsen and the Redeemer College Choir. At 8 p.m., at Redeemer College, **Ancaster,** Ont. Pre-concert lecture at 7 p.m. For tickets call (416) 648-2131.



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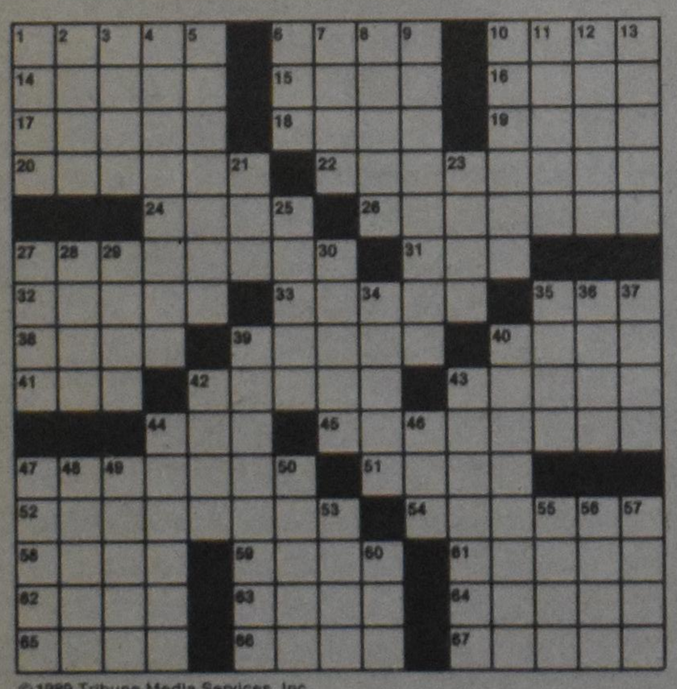
Weekly Puzzle by I. Miller



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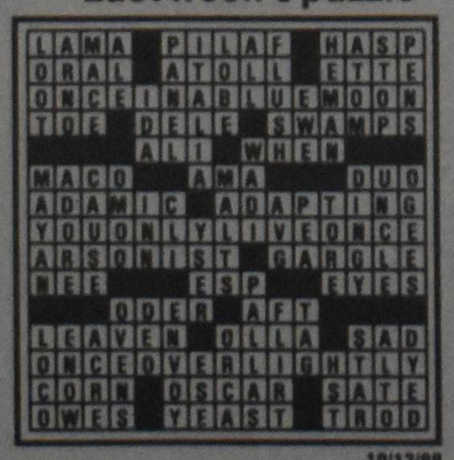
ACROSS
1 Turner's machine
6 Food thickener
10 —-pie (entirely)
14 Anonym
15 N.B. word
16 Starbuck's skipper
17 Fr. patron saint
18 Nosh store
19 Rajah's mate
20 Judged
22 Wearing zori
24 Moffo
26 Brawl
27 Bibliophile's cabinet
31 Number
32 See eye to eye
33 Inuit's canoe
35 Hack
38 — Rabbit
39 Sired
40 — California
41 Toady response
42 Decimal system name
43 — example (be a model)
44 A likely story!
45 Garner role
47 Gives in
51 Vinegary
52 King and Queen
54 Evoke
58 Sentry's shout
59 Butterine
61 Varlet
62 A Gardner
63 Fed
64 FL bird
65 Ingress
66 Nimbus
67 Pee Wee

DOWN
1 Cheryl or Alan
2 Sailing word
3 Pitchfork feature
4 Knockout punch
5 Quiddity
6 Also
7 Leaves
8 Cartographer's tome
9 Columbo garb
10 Wine bottle
11 Time and —
12 Jury
13 Endure
21 Genetic stuff
23 Dip
25 Out of line
27 Pamper
28 Golliwogg
29 Galena and magnetite
30 Raring to go
34 Fluctuates
35 "The Censor"
36 Partly open
37 Wedding —
39 Huge animal
40 Adorn in a way
42 June honorees
43 Lurker
44 Scarlet letter wearer
46 Noted miler
47 Yearned
48 Sp. singer
49 Casals' forte
50 Historic AL city
53 Actress Patricia
55 TLC word
56 Burl of song
57 Head of Fr.
60 Yoko —

Last week's puzzle



10/12/89

PhD for Van der Meulen

Jacob Allen Van der Meulen has received his PhD from the University of Toronto. He concentrated his studies on American history.

Van der Meulen is currently doing research at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. where he received scholarships.

He attended Fraser Valley College and is a 1982 graduate of the University of British Columbia.

Jacob is a graduate of the Toronto District Christian High School (1975) and he attended John Knox Christian School in Brampton, Ont. His parents are Stan and Alice Van der Meulen. Home address: 18-32691 Garibaldi Dr., Abbotsford, BC V2S 6W8.

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We are that 'letter' from home ....

the Windmill

Books

Robert VanderVennen, book review editor

Christian living

Making choices that are morally right

Choices: Making Right Decisions on a Complex World, by Lewis B. Smedes. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986. Softcover, 121 pp., $13.95 U.S. Reviewed by James H. Olthuis, Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto.

Perhaps the most agonizing question that we humans struggle with time and time again is the query: "Did I — did we — do the right thing?" And the question is inescapable; for to be human is to choose. The fabric of our lives is woven and unwoven by the choices we make or fail to make. The high stakes involved in choosing lead all of us at times to long for a recipe book of rules telling us what to do. At the same time, we all know of experiences so complex and tangled that rules clash, or seem inappropriate.

One thing is clear: it is not easy to make right decisions in a complex world. Particularly moral choices can be difficult and perplexing. We need all the help we can get. In his recent book, *Choices,* Lewis Smedes, professor of ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary, in Pasadena, Calif., helps us sort out the many factors involved in the dynamic process of choosing. He does so with warmth and sensitivity. *Choices* is a little gem of a book, sparkling with insight and savvy.

Smedes begins by describing what morality is: "Morality is only about living in a way that respects people's rights and cares for people's needs." Morality is part of life "because our humanity is in touch with a deep design for how human beings are meant to treat each other." Moral rules match the kind of people we are, pointing us "toward the humanity our Maker intends for us."

Direction, with sensitivity

Beginning with this profoundly biblical note, Smedes wants to help us come to some "rational conclusions about the choices we make." And he sure-footedly moves in that direction. At the same time, he is acutely aware of the intricacies and enigmas that often befuddle life. This is a winning combination which rings true to life: clear direction with sensitivity to complexity. He avoids offering a black-white, no-shadings, no-nuances, no-degrees approach ("morality is too complex to be jammed into categories labelled 'right' and 'wrong' ") even as he avoids a no-clear-direction-anything-goes approach (there are two "Absolute Moral Rules, ... the rules of justice and love").

Smedes shows himself a deft stickhandler (shades of Gretzky!) in the moral arena. He never loses sight of the goal, but, at the same time, has a highly developed peripheral vision (like Gretzky's) which allows him to consider seriously details and complications. At one and the same time, Smedes holds high the value of moral rules as "user-friendly," even as he tells us to be wary when anyone says: "These are the rules, period, no questions allowed." Again, he has no sooner told us that respecting the rules (chapter four) is a good way to know we've made a right choice, when he adds that considering consequences (chapter five) is also an excellent way for determining a good choice.

In a helpful discussion, Smedes ranks rules. There are the "Rules of Every Game," rules we have to obey in every game we play without exception: love and justice. There are the "Rules of Particular Games," rules that make a game the special game it is, for example, the rules of marriage. In our imperfect world sometimes we need to make exceptions to these rules. They are "almost absolute."

There are "Rules of Strategy" which need to be changed when they no longer help us live as we ought to live. And there are "Rules of Propriety" which help us to do things decently and in style. There are many exceptions to them, they change gradually, and differ from culture to culture.

Sorting out the complexity

In these chapters Smedes has done us all a great service in helping sort out the complexity we all face on the moral landscapes of life. That, of course, doesn't mean that I have no questions to ask or comments to make. Thus it will be no surprise to those who know me when I suggest that describing morality in terms of respect and care can be deepened and enriched by introducing the notion of troth (reliability, faithfulness, loyalty). But that kind of conversation must wait for another time and place.

For me, chapter six, "When You Can't Be Sure, Be Responsible" and chapter seven, "Being Wrong Is Not All Bad," are pastorally the most important. I say this from my experience in counselling. For although rules are helpful, they do not "take all risks out of the making of choices or relieve us of the agony of making decisions when we are not sure which one is right." Indeed, "most of the time we manoeuvre our ways through freedom zones where what matters is not whether we have done the right thing, but whether we acted wisely and well considering the options we had." Right on! "There are huge areas in our lives where the question is not whether we did right or wrong, but only whether we acted like responsible people."

But sometimes we make bad choices. What then? Take heart: "After all is said and done, being right is not the most important thing in the world. Being forgiven is." Nothing need separate us from the love of God, not even our wrong decisions. What comfort! What encouragement to act without being judgmental, to act in compassion and love, making the best decisions we can, all the time uttering a prayer similar to the prayer of Kierkegaard with which Smedes ends his book.

Lord I have to make a choice, and I'm afraid that I may make the wrong one. But I have to make it anyway; and I can't put it off. So I will make it, and trust you to forgive me if I do wrong. And, Lord, I will trust you, too, to help make things right afterward. Amen.

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Friends of God

Wayne Brouwer

Sing!

"Sing to the Lord, you saints of his! Praise his holy name! You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing to you and not be silent!" **(Psalm 30:4, 11, 12)**

When the Ayatollah Khomeini returned to power in Iran some years ago, one of his first decrees was to ban music from the airwaves of the country! No music on the radio, none on television!

"Music," he said, "makes the brain inactive!"

Can you imagine that?

"No singing!"

It's no wonder that the Ayatollah was no friend to Christianity. Music grows naturally in the heart of the child of God. "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs," says the Apostle Paul. "Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19). And the Old Testament heritage of the faith is filled with the majestic splendour of choral celebration.

"Without music life would be a mistake," said Friedrich Nietzsche. And, maybe for some, that summarizes all too well their tragic existences. Take the thought of another philosopher, the American George Santayana: "Music is essentially *useless,* as life is!"

Maybe that's what Robert Ingersoll had in mind as he lay dying. He had spent his life caustically denying God and defying God's power. After he lay on his final bed, the funeral invitations went out according to his instructions. They carried this pathetic line: "There will be no singing!"

Can you imagine that?

Heart of joy

Tom Prideaux, then entertainment editor of *Life* magazine, once wrote about hearing Irving Berlin in performance. A vast host of vocalists had sung Berlin's music over the years, but here was the great one bringing his own tunes to life as no other could. "It wasn't a man singing a song," said Prideaux. "It was a man singing his autobiography!"

And that's true of the Christian too. A friend once asked Franz Joseph Haydn why his church music was always so full of gladness. "I cannot make it otherwise," he replied. "I write according to the thoughts I feel. When I think upon my God, my heart is so full of joy that the notes dance and leap from my pen!"

A new song

In one congregation where I was serving for a time, there was a young woman who used to come with her friends. She was a nursing student, full of zest and the life of every party. But she was bored at our worship services. She would settle in at the edge of the bench and yawn through the whole message. When everybody stood to sing, she'd stand and look around, just waiting for it all to be finished.

But I'll never forget one Sunday morning. It was Easter. When we started singing, she *beamed!* Her face shone and she was making music as energetically as anyone else! I made sure I found her after worship.

"What happened, Chris?" I asked. "You're different today!"

And she told me about her family. Her parents were divorced years before. Things were bad between her Mom and Dad. They hurt each other a lot. And they never forgave each other.

Then her Dad got cancer. The week before he had died. Chris and her Mom had flown out to see him just before the end. He told them he was a Christian. He told them he was sorry for all the grief he had put them through. He told them about how Jesus had forgiven him. He told them about the cross of Good Friday. And when they started to cry together, he told them about Easter Sunday.

And suddenly it all made sense to Chris! That's why she was singing today! Jesus had touched her father's life and now Chris knew Christ's love too!

Ira Sankey was another singer who knew the touch of Christ. He loved the music of David. And David would probably have liked Sankey's testimony too, the one he wrote as a song:

My life flows on in endless song; above earth's lamentation
I hear the sweet, not far-off hymn that hails the new creation.
Through all the tumult and the strife I hear the music ringing;
It finds an echo in my soul — how can I keep from singing?

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